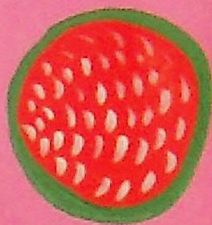
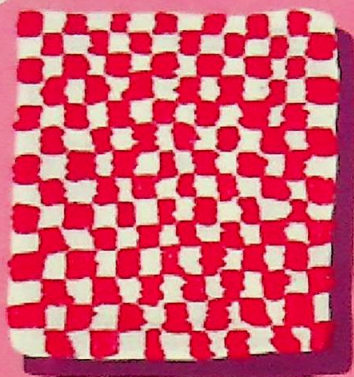


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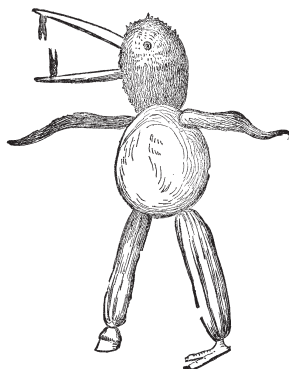
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Cover art by Luke Cavagnac

QUIET GRASS, GREEN STONE

Dean Young

I love when out of nowhere

I love when out of nowhere
my cat jumps on me
and my body isn't even surprised.

Me who wants to be surprised by everything

like a dandelion

like a bottle cap

cricket cricket.

I keep waiting for the god under the anthill to speak up.
I keep waiting for the part of the myth
where everyone turns into a different bird
or the reeds start talking
or the horses come out of the ocean
in their parliamentary regalia
and cities grow from their hoof prints.
I keep waiting for the bugle
and the jackal-headed god to weigh my heart across the river.

All this daylight in just a few moments
pours itself into darkness. More and more
I'm satisfied with partial explanations
like a fly with one wing walking.

ROUGH DRAFTS

Western wind, rearrange me.
Bail out bliss and crunch it.
I have been half in love with Vickie Dwojak.
The world of dew is a world of do-do.
Often I'm permitted to return to K-Mart.
My best robot shoots rockets from its chest.
The earliest form of polo was played with human heads.
Death creeps me out but I'm still attracted
to its tongue in my mouth. I heard a fly buzz
the day I made pickled eggs. Whatever
I'm the child of must be something big.
All the new thinking is about loss
and in this it resembles lots of my old socks.
Something's skipping in the fossil record.
I too hop from branch to branch
with an inordinate fondness for beetles.
My pecker's giving me problems.
I wander lonely and outloud,
luckily my sister follows me around with her journal.
I like those old jingles.
Downward on extended wing-ding.
No ideas but in ka-ching.
It's 12:20 no wait it's 1:15.
What time is it where you are?
I like an explosion that leaves a star.
I like my steak with a good char.
I hope I end up far from here.
My doctor says I'm ruining my liver.
Take me to a different river.

EDGEWORK

It's not easy to carry a pyramid
into the sunset with a feather. The sunset
burns the feather, the pyramid crumbles.
It's not easy taking in all the doctors say.
The body is made of tar. Tar
doesn't like being above ground.
Magnets are useless, peacocks ferocious.
All songs are about falling apart which
provides at least a rhyme for heart
because all things must be sung to be
terrible enough. Instructively,
a saint makes an omelet, a saint
holds her arms out and some of the flames
form a crown. The soul leaves the body
with candy-wrapper crinkles. A window
is a sea. A red shirt approximates.
You can see where wings drag in the frost.
You can see faces beneath the ice.
A saint carries a fox under her cape
made of a thousand ears, ichor everywhere.
It's too bright. I can't find my way out.
I can't get drunk enough to warrant
ascension but I can wither yellow,
howl green. Not everyone gets to
lie down in a meadow.

THE ART OF SPEAKING

Lauren Russell

A general may be at fault in five different ways:

- (1) If reckless, he is easily killed.
- (2) If afraid of dying, he is easily captured.
- (3) If quick tempered, he is easily provoked.
- (4) If too sensitive about his honor, he is easily insulted.
- (5) If overly concerned about his men, he is easily harassed.

A conversationalist may be at fault in seven different ways:

- (1) If reticent, she is easily dismissed as boring or self-important.
- (2) If garrulous, she is easily thought overbearing, flirtatious, drunk, or egotistical.
- (3) If opinionated, she will easily alienate half the party.
- (4) If too quick to agree, she may easily be perceived as insubstantial or obsequious.
- (5) If she punctuates her speech with gesticulation, she may easily cause serious injury to person or property.
- (6) If she keeps her arms at her sides, she may easily appear stiff, like a toy soldier or Lego® person.
- (7) If she folds her arms across her chest, she will easily be thought apprehensive and unapproachable.

Perhaps she does not want to be approached.

Perhaps she does not want to be a conversationalist.

Perhaps she would prefer to be a house spider,
claymation waterfall, or ancient Chinese military strategist.

In warfare there are generally nine types of positions, as follows:

- (1) Dissentious
- (2) Facile
- (3) Critical
- (4) Open
- (5) Commanding
- (6) Serious
- (7) Fearful
- (8) Beleaguered
- (9) Desperate.

In conversation, there are only seven:

- (1) Taciturn
- (2) Indecisive
- (3) Critical
- (4) Simpering
- (5) Incoherent
- (6) Apprehensive
- (7) Inattentive (alternately bored, distracted, tired, or drugged).

Weigh all possibilities before making a move.
Acquire the art of being devious before hoping to win.

Fighting with fire may take five forms:

- (1) Burning men
- (2) Burning stores
- (3) Burning baggage trains
- (4) Burning arsenals
- (5) Destroying supply routes.

or

- (1) Slander
- (2) Baiting
- (3) Hate speech
- (4) Sharp and carefully aimed sarcasm
- (5) Exposure (at a gathering, on a social networking site, or on a bathroom stall partition).

To use any of the five forms of incendiarism to best advantage,
do not advance against the direction of the wind.

Those who attack with fire must have perspicacity,
while those who attack with water must have strength.

The wallflower sitting alone at the bar is secretly consolidating her forces.

EQUIDISTANT FROM THE CENTER OF NEVER

Mary Jo Bang

The door closed on the self she had been and
the outside went soft. A cat brushed by a leg.

A car went over a cliff. The clock minutia stopped
and was hours ahead when she opened her eyes.

The sky opened and let out an image: the optical
illusion of a mountain melting, each former rock

now a bird in the mouth of a cat, or something
like that. Countless snare wires fired in succession,

a tornado continually mimed a bluster on one side
or the other of audible. Everything lasted a second.

THE EARTHQUAKE IN THIS CASE WAS

A seismic storm that knocked down
buildings—the buildings teetering before falling
the way ideological beliefs might sway back and forth

if they were preserved in a glass tower
that was about to be toppled. In any storm,
one hopes he or she is bound in advance

by the story line to escape at the end. In speech,
the mouth becomes a wheelbarrow
that can assert its contents.

The tool-and-die exactitude of pre-packaged thought
is estranging because it suggests
the discrete elements can't be teased apart.

Blind faith relies on an obedience that verges
on boredom. Any disquiet, however slight, might
define a moment like a character's obsessive cough

might define a character by exploding
when it shouldn't. It keeps exploding just when
it shouldn't and when it does it acts in the story

like a glass box cracked by a hammer that breaks
and becomes a broken box. In both situations,
action releases the stale air encased there.

And now the question: what do we do with the longing
for what can destroy us? You're free to think:
logic can change even the most obstinate person; or,

logic cannot change the most obstinate person.

HAD THERE BEEN

There had been a particularly disturbing dream the night before. Awake, the associations led to something she'd read about the Audubon Society in the *Times*, which led to years ago, when she came down from the city and saw A— in Philadelphia, A— saying she hadn't liked her daughter until later. The shock of that. The shock also of what someone can become. She said she gardened now. She was surprised she still remembered that. Blind slats let in an inch or so of sun times the length of the window. Outside the sigh of a braking bus, the length of the street times once upon a time. The story began, This is the corner where the murder took place, of course, corner could be parking garage, or an offtrack betting parlor. Murders happen everywhere, even inside the brain; a moment of anger and just like that the other is over.

POEM FOR AN ANTIQUE KOREAN FISHING BOBBER

Dobby Gibson

Little glass planet
I like picking you up it feels
as if I'm holding my own thought bubble,
one blown molten with a puff
of some craftsman's breath—is it still inside you?
You are a beautiful bauble
it's hard to imagine anyone
hurling you into the sea,
but at some point we all have a job to do.
I think of the early mornings
and storm warnings
you braved just to find the village dinner.
I don't remember carrying you
home on the plane from Seoul,
crew dozing behind the cockpit door,
autopilot engaged—what were they dreaming of?
I don't even know what shore
you washed up on: Busan, Incheon, Samcheok.
Are you glad we made you a home here
so far from the sea? is a question
I have but won't ask
fearing your answer is the one I never want to hear.
I love how perfectly you fit in my hand,
at first cold, and the way the morning looks
through you, as alien green and cloudy
as the future I pledge to no longer fear.

But I wouldn't want to be held
up to the light either,
not because I'm a monster,
but because I, too, am transparent and trusting,
mistaking both for the truth.

Beneath our lives
there are sordid undulations and embraces
brief and sweet,
a nearly invisible line connecting us to the fleet,
every breath worth saving,
like the sip of air inside us
full of an old sea's grace
or the one ancient word filling our lungs
that once released back into the wild
will finally set us free.

MICAWBERS BOOKSTORE

What am I going to do
when I can't find any more shirts
to fold? Someone told me sharks never
sleep, and I believe it every time I go
downstairs in the middle of the night
just to feel like an impostor in my own house,
staring into the artificial sunrise
I trapped inside my fridge.
Five minutes of that is all the reason
I need to forage for poetry
in the bookstore
in the beautiful neighborhood
named after the saint of lost things.
The poetry is just two bookcases wide
with way too much Mary Oliver
but there's always at least one thing
for me to find, even if it's Hans or Tom
behind the counter listening
to the Twins lose to the Sox in the seventh
on an actual AM radio—who has those anymore?
Or Karen who slightly scares me
in the best bookseller ways
beginning with giving my sister
a C in high school English in 1986.
What an odd relief to rediscover I know
less than I should even as I watch them
conduct their inexplicable backward primitive
inventory practices in No. 2 pencil.
They are the keepers of my great secrets:
things I've read and passed over

what I prefer to think about and ignore
and the occasionally nasty things I've said
about other writers maybe even you
when no one else is inside the store.
Which is the best time to be there,
when they're about to close
or it's so fucking cold they may as well have,
snow piled up and obscuring the windows,
nothing but groans from rickety floorboards
so badly in need of varnish
that so perfectly hold the sounds
of distant notions I love entirely
for their inability to arrive.

from FAMILY ALBUM

Danniel Schoonebeek

I. Birthday

Father's plucking

five pellets

& each tweeze

from son's cheek

pop's dropping

his buckshot

tink tink in the basin

III. Moving day

Bless you 1915

& bless

mister Schiele

he stroked

son a house with

red shingles

Let's live here

ten years

eat crow

& starve

in our attic

Son's brother

mum father

sis the goat

& the basset

they snored

head to toe

like kings

in their single

VI. Mumps

Wet nurse says check

the boy's vitals:

his cat died of worms

he swore off god

by this time son was 16%

made of silence

IX. Bull market

Son's friends were
militia they shipped
in a box son built
them a brothel it was
death not a furlough

XIII. Alimony

Then pop disappeared

it was summer

son axed a slit

in the breaker

and made for the border

XX. Landslide

Father they crown

son king

of your rust

but forget

in the fanfare

this means he rules everything

XXVI. Briefcase

And off

into the heart

of our American

white collar

pheasant hunt

my family

you're the first

shot I fire

AN INTERVIEW WITH MAGGIE NELSON

In June 2013, Maggie Nelson was interviewed by Dara Wier for the Juniper Summer Writing Institute and Workshops; this interview is based on that conversation. Thanks to Duffie Taylor for careful transcription of our audio tape and to the Juniper Institute for letting us broadcast it there.

Maggie Nelson's books include *Shiner*; *The Latest Winter*; *Jane: A Murder*; *Something Bright, Then Holes*; *Women, the New York School and Other True Abstractions*; *Bluets*, and *The Art of Cruelty*. She teaches for the CalArts MFA Writing Program. In 2011, she was awarded a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship for poetry, and in 2007, her work received an Arts Writers grant from the Creative Capital/Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

Here's what PEN America writer Danniel Schoonebeek has to say: "Nothing, it seems, falls outside the reach of Maggie's hunting and gathering. As a poet and thinker, she's a magpie of the highest order . . . [h]ow we live with a world in which we must live with ourselves is her enduring conflict." In the same piece I just quoted, you quote from a late British poet Douglas Oliver: "Each narrowing of what contemporary poetry is supposed to do bears with it an equivalent narrowing in the definition of a human being." You go on to say, "I stand in fervent opposition to such narrowing."

I think that's a pretty great place for us to start—so—can you say something?

Well, gosh, yes, I just love that Douglas Oliver quote. I think I said that in response to being asked to say something about what poetry is or what poetry should do. And it just feels like that's the response to give, right? That kind of expansiveness that Oliver is speaking in favor of just seems,

you know—I mean, I love talking about poetry; I love talking about genre or craft or all kinds of things we can talk about today, but I'm glad you read that because I think that my whole writing life and other lives have been more about what Eve Sedgwick asked, which is, "You can say *that*?"

You've said that almost everything you compose you compose as a letter.

I said that in *Bluets*.

Even if you're no longer doing this, can you say some things about what composing in an epistolary manner might contribute to your writing?

Well, I think, I was just talking about this to someone today. I lived in New York for a long time and I was very—you know I didn't get an MFA. When I was coming up, you were just supposed to move to New York, and I didn't even know what you were supposed to do really. You know it was just like, go to New York, go to the St. Mark's Poetry Project, go to the church of poetry. And so I became very quickly smitten with the New York School and Frank O'Hara and others, and Eileen Myles, who was then just teaching workshops out of her apartment or whoever had the best loft. So I took a bunch of those, but I think that whole kind of poetry which is very much about immediacy and the occasion and direct address, like O'Hara said, *When you can't just pick up the phone, write the poem*. And then that has a lot of conviviality and *joie de vivre*, but there's also a— whether it's Paul Celan or Emily Dickinson or Robert Creeley or other poets that have been important to me, they have that form of direct address at their core but in a much more somber if not grim tonality, so I think that I've for a long time kind of ricocheted between those two kinds of poles, which probably reflects my temperament in general.

I wrote *Bluets* when I moved from New York City to Los Angeles, and I was very much out of a community I had built for fifteen years, and I felt

very alone, and the joke of that book was that people like Nietzsche or Wittgenstein or other philosophers, especially the aphoristic ones, often they sound a lot like they're talking in a hall of mirrors—"Ah, but now you're saying this, when before you were saying that"—and I thought that was a really funny mode to get into when you felt really alone. Which is why I talk about Newton in that book, and his assistant who helped him discover the spectrum, and how some people say, actually, he didn't have an assistant, it was just, you know, a figment of his imagination or something to make him sound less lonely. I think when I wrote *Bluets* I was like, wow, I don't have any addressee, and I'm very alone here, so that book in some way puts to the test what speaking to a "you" may or may not be.

I do do other kinds of writings, beyond those with a direct address. But usually I do try to keep it hot, and I don't mean like sexy, well maybe that [laughter], but I don't think of criticism or scholarly-ish writing as a place to kind of dump your boringness. I think of it as a place to stay really engaged and stay hot in that way, so even if there's not a direct address of a "you," I typically write with a pretty hot "I" that is narrating encounters, whether they be intimate or whether they be with cultural artifacts of some kind.

I wasn't going to bring that up yet but since you brought it up a lot just now, I will. Talking about your writing as an art critic, as a poet, as a prose writer, you know, I think you've covered all the bases that most of the people in this room write into or from—except fiction. Except fiction. You don't write short stories or novels. Have you ever almost?

Oh God. Um. No. No. I mean no. In college—

Just no. Okay. Stay away from that stuff, ha.

I love certain things in that regard, but no.

Yeah, well, you're doing a lot already. People call something about one thing you do the lyric essay. Why do you think it's important for people sometimes to qualify the word essay with the word lyric?

You know, I have to confess, lovely as lyric essays are, it's not a name I apply personally to any work I do. I don't think I've ever written an essay. This book [*Bluets*] is classified as—what did we decide—*essay/literature*—which is totally fine with me, because I like the idea of a long whole of something. But while there are lyric essays, I don't think I've ever written a lyric essay.

You know, a book like *The Art of Cruelty* has short chapters, but they're each a form of chapter or investigation. I think certain chapters likely are more lyric than others, but they're not really lyric essays. Well, let me back up. I teach in a hybridized kind of writing program, and I love hybridity and people describe a lot of things that I do as hybridity, but I think I love poetry for what poetry does, I love prose for what prose can do, and I love criticism for what criticism can do. And I do write in between, or maybe there are good-sounding sentences in some of the prose, or maybe there's good argumentation in some of the poetry, but I don't typically write in something in order to make it a mixture.

I usually start with an idea that's bothering me, and I research it. I love Henry James's idea of, you know, he describes his novels as the pearl that grows in the oyster, that it begins as an irritation in the bed of the oyster's skin and that irritation accrues sediment and accrues crap and eventually hopefully makes this pearl. But I think that I just pay more attention not really to genre, but to the irritation and the muck, and then kind of see what form it takes. When I wrote *The Art of Cruelty*, I was just ranting. I was just ranting about crap, about the torture era that we were living under during Bush, about popular culture, about violence in art. I'd been a longtime lecturer in a scholarly way about twentieth century art movements and the history of the avant-garde, so I'd built up a lot to

say about the Futurists and Artaud and the Surrealists and all kinds of things. So I think it was really that I didn't know I was ranting and then I eventually thought—will this be a rant, or will this be art criticism? I know this sounds kind of retro but [the work] has to find its comfortable speaking voice first, and then its speaking voice will indicate something to me about form.

Well, The Art of Cruelty, when I was reading it, I thought, I'm grateful to Maggie Nelson for doing all this work and bringing so many disparate things together in provocative ways for thoughts for someone reading the book to have. The trails the book follows are many and long; it's really beautiful, and it's difficult, and I don't mean difficult to read. I mean it proposes difficult questions and things you have to take seriously when you think about what they do to you, and it's beautiful for that reason.

Thank you.

*So you mentioned Henry James, and Henry James is somebody I admire so much, and I've always loved a quotation of his that you also quote in one of your books. He says in one of his novels, of a character: "Try to be one of those on whom nothing is lost." And I've always thought that's really a perfect way of defining our potential. I think because of the variety of everything you tackle, and because of the ways you do write, say, even in a book like *Bluets*, you use so many different subjects, contents, manners and things that you go after that you are trying to be one of those on whom nothing is lost, and I have always loved that quotation, because I like the idea of focusing on the word nothing so that "nothing" goes away and is replaced by all of this. And I really think you do that so beautifully and it's a great privilege to get to read your work when you do that.*

How do you imagine and compose the many ways of proposing all those trails, and then following, and then changing your directions along the way? What do you do when you research something?

Well, it's different for different books. I mean, I think when we research, it has different speeds. Like the first book I wrote, about a murder in my family, called *Jane: A Murder*. That book to me was kind of like a threshold to writing these longer book-length kind of projects, and I think in that book it was very explicit: I need to know about this thing; I don't want to ask anybody in my family about this so I'm going to trudge off to the library and put in all I had of her, which is, as I say in the book, her two dates, her birth date and her death date, and just see what I could find, which was regrettably a trove of information about her murder. But in some ways I think that threshold feeling of deciding to research, that's one mode and then there's kind of like blue-book mode, of having a lifelong affliction and noticing what you've collected after the fact. When I was in Mexico at age seventeen and weeping at the beauty of glass in a Mexican blue glass factory and picking up shards, I wasn't thinking, *Be someone on whom nothing is lost; someday this will come back to me*. But when I did decide finally, I'm going to write this book on the color blue, you know, I did amass all my blue junk, and I did make a kind of blue altar which I put in my living/dining/bedroom and would kind of add to it. People gave me blue things, and when I was kind of stuck, I would look at the altar and be like, oh yes, the story of those beads, you know, oh yes, the story of that shard, so that was a little bit more like taking inventory of an obsession that had always been very natural.

And then I think the last example I'll give is something like *The Art of Cruelty*. I wrote about my mother's sister's murder, and in writing about violence, one is always afflicted by this feeling that one is recasting or redoing the violence because you're rerepresenting in writing and how to do that—I used to joke with myself, *Oh, what am I going to do today? Look up how to rhyme bullet hole with something in my rhyming dictionary?* You know, it's very perverse to aestheticize horror, and I had to think about how to do what I wanted to do in poetry without engaging in that kind of aesthetization, which struck me as repellent.

It was very difficult. In my life as a teacher and as a scholar and as a viewer, I was looking at a lot of art that was helping me. Whether it was Ana Mendieta and these scary rape re-creation pieces she was doing in Iowa, or whether it was the Viennese Actionists and their crazy videos, performing various kind of penetrations upon each other and things—those are all things I was thinking about and looking at when I was writing those two books about my aunt. And all that art was going in these other folders, and then when I finished those two books, I thought, thank God, I'm done with writing about rerepresentations of violence.

That was a heavy five or six years. But then I realized I had this amassed bunch of other stuff that I'd been writing and talking about, which I had a lot more thoughts about, and because, as I mentioned, the political-cultural moment felt so grim in terms of the way the culture seemed to be working overtime to normalize the relationship between entertainment and torture, and because I have a deep love-hate relationship with the kind of avant-garde fetish of viscerally moving/terrorizing the audience, and because I felt like I had been playing myself with terrorizing myself in my own writing, with reappraising these violent things, it felt very natural to write critically about this kind of other facet. Eileen Myles once said to me, after I wrote *Jane* and *The Red Parts*, "I really feel a trilogy here." And I was like, you're fucking crazy, there's no way, there's no way, but when I finished *The Art of Cruelty*, I said, "You know what, you are right." I think that was the third piece of this puzzle: one in poetry, one in prose, and then one in criticism.

That's perfect, that's really good.

Yeah, and I also had a red, white, and blue thing going. I had the blue book, and then *The Red Parts*, and so I said to the publisher of *The Art of Cruelty*, "It has to be white." And they said, "Why?" And I was like, "It just does." It wasn't like an homage to the United States or anything. It

was just like a feeling that it had to finish this sort of thing.

It's great we have to have reasons for things being. [laughter] I want that white book.

I know. And they did, amazingly.

In Bluets, you quote Joseph Cornell, a great American collage box-maker of beautiful things, and he said: "Resolve this day as before to transcend in my work the overwhelming sense of sadness that has been so binding and wasteful in the past."

Oh yes, Joseph Cornell. That's so sad.

You picked a pretty moving quote from him—straight to sadness and the overcoming of it and putting aside of it. So do you want to talk about him and his work?

All of my books have kind of like, a cast of characters. What I'm working on now has [Donald] Winnicott and Eve Sedgwick and some other people. Cornell was one of the patron saints of *Bluets*. As I say in the book, he constructed these collages he called habitats because he loved birds—I love other words for things, because I get really bored with like the literary words we use, the collage poem or the lyric essay, so I'm like, what about a habitat?

When I wrote *Jane: A Murder* and we were laboring and laboring—Richard Nash was helping me—and we were trying to find some title, and I was like "A Murder in Poems," and I was like, no. We were trying a bunch of different things. Finally, I think it's just, *A Murder*, because you know, I'm remurdering her, and it holds all that ambivalence I was describing of redoing the violence.

With *Bluets*, I liked the idea of constructing a habitat, because I write about the bower birds and this notion of assembling your kind of cool-looking blue stuff, so I think that Cornell mattered a lot for that reason and because of many others, because of his own love of blue and because of his love of Dickinson, and also his movie *Rose Hobart*, which is so beautiful. In it he collages together frames of the actress he loved. He got all the close-ups and then he literally cut the pieces of film and taped them together and he ran it through with a rose-colored lens and showed it with this crazy cha-cha-cha sound track. I saw *Rose Hobart* at the REDCAT Theater in LA and it solved some pressing formal questions for me. I teach at an art school, so it's very useful for this, as often I feel that the answer to your projects doesn't lie in literature—I mean it can lie in literature, but it can also lie in another form of art.

So when I saw *Rose Hobart*, I suddenly was like, blue was my character, and I've got to tape him, her, it, ze, whatever, together, and I'll just kind of run it like a reel. Also it was Cornell's particular mournfulness and his insouciance and his freakishness that are all just so inspiring, too. And his loneliness, living with his mother in Utopia Parkway, and although he may or may not have had these liaisons with Yayoi Kusama and other people—and I had a mentor also, named Mary Ann Caws, who is a great translator of Surrealist and DADA poetry, and she had just finished editing Cornell's journals so she gave me that as a gift. You know, I always think of books as like this great network with all these enfolded thank yous, and so I thought, I'm going to work with Cornell because I love Mary Ann Caws.

You pick really good company.

Yeah, company's good.

I know it is. So when you're picking those characters to inhabit what you're writing, you're picking people whose work resonates in as many ways as yours does?

Right. Well, I mean, that's half of the thing, too. I mean, it's like you're canon-making; you're showing people what you like. I was reading with Wayne Koestenbaum in New York the other day, and someone asked him, after he read a very, very densely allusive piece, and someone asked, "Do you care that I don't know a single person that you just referenced?" And he said, "Absolutely not, because I've spent thirty years of my life looking at every O'Hara character mentioned in a Frank O'Hara poem, and because of that, I got my education in gay culture in New York City." And he was like, maybe someone out there will do the same with me. I mean, I write about a lot of people that you might know about but some that you might not and to me, like in *The Art of Cruelty*, or even in *Bluets*, it can be very political too, you know? Because you're saying like, Nao Bustamante, a performance artist you may not have heard of is going to be up against canonical figures like André Breton who is going to be—you know, I'm always very conscious of like who's in the room, like [in] what I'm writing now, Audre Lorde is going to speak to Slavoj Žizek, and they're going to be in the same room, and that's part of the project: not keeping certain people out of the conversation.

Well, I had one more question to ask you before we open it up for everybody else to join in, and it has to do with your mentioning Wayne Koestenbaum, so thank you, helping make us seem as if we've planned on this. So this is kind of mundane in a way, but here's some writers I would put on a table with your books—to consider a little bit: Sarah Manguso, Amy Fusselman, David Shields, Ben Lerner, John D'Agata, Wayne Koestenbaum, Eileen Myles, Geoff Dyer—

It sounds like the Amazon. I can't hear that without thinking of Amazon—this might be "on Amazon," ha.

It does sound like one of those if you liked this you might like that-derived messages; these are all people who do something more attractive than bland writing about subjects, because they all have character that's really strong in their

work, and they question the kind of work that they're doing for the most part.

Yeah.

So are any of these people you particularly might want to talk about?

Yeah, I think I know them all.

I thought you might.

No, I do. I know them all. Except Dyer.

Anyone you want to recommend?

Well, Wayne I adore, and he has this new book coming out called *My 1980s and Other Essays*, a book of collected essays, that will be terrific. I just read Ben Lerner's new novel in manuscript, as yet untitled, but it's going to be great. Sarah Manguso I think is terrific; she is working on something about time. Eileen Myles is a longtime friend and hero of mine and will have a book coming out soon about her dog Rosie and also a long essay about doing a homelessness experiment for a week in New York City—both of which will be terrific.

Okay. Great. Let's see what questions our audience might want to bring into the conversation.

Audience: This question is about *Bluets*. As you were talking about Cornell and *Rose Hobart*, the inference for me was that you did not write those pieces in the order in which they appear in the book, and I wonder if that's the case, how they were composed and how did you make your decisions?

Yeah, that's a really good question. You know, I think this book had a long travail, and when I first wrote a lot of these as poems, and I just hated them, I don't know, they just sounded really precious and awful to me, and I kept imagining a book like, *Blue Poems* or something, and I just couldn't bear it, and I was also in a bit of a bad mood when I was writing this book. I felt snappy.

There was a kind of pressure I wanted, and the poems were too diffuse. So I collapsed all the line breaks. And then I came upon this method of making sentences—I don't usually have a method, and I don't want to overstate the method of this book, but it was a loose method whereby I had a list of blue stories and anecdotes and issues and then I had a set of sentence structures. Like from Wittgenstein—they're all stolen—like “But now you are talking as if _____,” etc. So a lot of the sentences begin as almost word replacements. Sometimes they would spill out in such a way that it was very clear to me that they would cluster, or that they needed a pause, in which case they would get a number. I also felt like I was writing a form of fiction—I mean everything in here is *true* quote unquote, but the first line is “Suppose I were to begin,” and so you know to me everything that follows comes under a speculative sign. I was also smitten with David Markson's book, *Wittgenstein's Mistress*, where it's maybe like a woman speaking maybe at the end of the world, and she's maybe the only person left alive which is [laughter] how I felt moving to LA and not knowing a single person.

And so I imagined this whole quasi-fictive, or speculative, space. I had these characters who were inhabiting this space. I realized there was a form of a narrative of this breakup or this loss and the narrative of my friend who had this accident and the narrative of a kind of rough spot of depression or whatever. Once I could kind of see those, after I'd written many, many poems and pieces and stuff, sometimes I would let the clusters stay and other times I would space them out, with no mathematical formula but

just enough to keep a reader going.

Then I had to arrange, which was a real task. I arranged *Jane* this way too—I just had to lay it out on the floor at one point. I think near the end I printed out each of the blue propositions—that’s what I call them—on a different sheet of paper, which is a ridiculous thing to do, because that means at least 270 or more pieces of print paper on the floor, and I’m sorry to the planet for that, but before the book goes to the publisher, I have to put it all the way out and look at it and make sure I didn’t miss a juxtaposition that would be particularly enthralling or some kind of pacing moment. Right now, I’m a bit frustrated in my writing process, because *Bluets* and *Jane* were both a little shorter from the new thing, but I’m trying to do the same thing with laying the sections out on the floor and ordering them, but it’s a little bit too long for this approach. It’s not that long, but it’s probably twice the length of *Bluets*, and I feel like I’ve reached my limit with this method.

So are you finished? Are you done writing it?

You know, we’ll see, but I think it’s more or less done, yeah. Well, I mean it’s not done—I’ve written the sections, but they’re not ordered. Eileen Myles always used to say in her workshops, “Poetry asks two questions in editing: ‘Should this stay or should this go?’; and ‘How does this look next to this?’” And I like bringing that to prose, and really using that instead of this belabored, academic juxtaposition. I like using faster juxtapositions, again with canon-making, and making it feel related. You know, I think someone said in a mean review that *Bluets* was like a tumblr feed or something, and I don’t want it to be a tumblr feed at all. I didn’t know what that was so I had to look at a tumblr feed. [laughter] But I don’t think a tumblr feed applies. A tumblr feed doesn’t do the work of metabolizing and working the stuff into your own body and your own thing, so that’s not what I’m doing. But I do think what I do respect about tumblr is the

notion of kind of curating your tastes and what you want to be in the same room with you, so I don't know if that is a good answer, but yeah.

Audience: I want to piggyback on how *Bluets's* fragmented ordering works. I was wondering how the color wheel factors in. I know yellow seems to crop up at times, and I wondered how that kind of figures into being on the floor mapping out your pieces? Like in a color-wheelish kind of a way—

I think I thought more about swatches, you know? Wave Books doesn't do cover images which is probably why I wanted them to do *Bluets*, because I felt this was kind of like a Protestant book or something. [laughter] Like the face of God or something. And also, Wittgenstein has like, *The Blue and Brown Books*, which looks just like a boring philosophy book. I wanted it to be very plain, but I liked this idea of color swatches, and I had a lot of pictures around my house of these squares of blue, which applies to the cyanometer that I describe, so I did get to retain this emptiness here.

Color wheels maybe not so much. Like what I read last night, I felt myself in kind of an antipathy with other colors while writing this book— like green became a kind of enemy, and that's why I talk about this painter Joan Mitchell, because she always said she hated the green of the south of France, and she was always trying to look for blue to paint. But the thing about color which we all know is that color is a matter of relationship, you know, so it doesn't *mean* without being side by side with something else, which I think was part of the book's problem about loneliness, about solitude and relation, which is like: how do we *mean* when we're separated, whether voluntary or involuntarily, from things that we love? I think what color is in terms of relationality in so far as it belongs to the wheel was of interest to me.

Audience: Something I love about *Bluets* is that it is concentrated and

beautiful about the blues that you talk about, in terms of your decisions to leave certain things out. I'm interested in general about that kind of decision making, but I'm also interested in specifically some of the ideas that I had heard about regarding blue and language. I heard it all on a radio show about colors. The idea is about blue being the last word to come into a language, but in general, what were some of your decisions about using that color in particular?

I mean there are so many blue facts, and I think I list them in the back. There are so many books about blue. Probably my favorite one—I like Michel Pastoureau's *Blue: The History of a Color* very much, and then I really like those John Cage books. I mean, it's hard with a book like this as opposed to William Gass's book, *On Being Blue*, which is kind of a companion piece in some ways to this book and a kind of provocation when I was writing it. It's hard when you're researching something—I'm sure all of you who write nonfiction are familiar with this. There are a lot of books about color or anything you research. You can be enraptured with the facts you find, kind of like, with *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* in Ancient Greece, they don't use any word for blue. Then you go to Greece, and you're like, holy shit, there's nothing but cerulean seas everywhere you look, and you're like, what do you mean they didn't have a word for the color blue, you know? It's like "the wine-dark sea," but it's not wine-dark, it's cerulean. So these are interesting facts, and they're amazing, and I had accumulated a lot more of them—factoids is what I called them—but unless they were tethered at the end of the day to the kind of narrative—I mean narrative as in beginning, middle, and end, but I also mean spiritual narrative—in a way I was trying to tell, the book was not going to be a repository for factoids.

What I was going to say before about those other books, even William Gass's or Alexander Theroux's book, *The Primary Colors*—there is a lot of color writing that tends toward listing. I didn't want the book to have

that listing quality. I felt like it needed to be inhabited by something. In the first draft, people read it and some of them said, “I just don’t believe it that you care about blue as much as you say you do.” So then I felt like I needed not to prove it, prove that I cared, but prove why the question of an aesthetic idea apart from yourself—what the weight of it might be asking. In what ways can beauty save us, especially in heartbreak? To me that question felt hot. Any factoid that didn’t contribute to that conversation eventually had to go.

Audience: As a literary essayist, you’re obviously in a literary kinship with Montaigne, and I was wondering about that influence, and I was also wondering about the influence of Diane Ackerman on your work?

I’ve never read anything by Diane Ackerman, I will say that up front, but I love [John] D’Agata’s great *The Lost History of the Essay*, *The Great American Essay* and all those books he’s been editing for Graywolf. They’re terrific, and again, I don’t really see anything I’ve been writing as an essay *per se*. I think essays have an arc to them, and I’m writing longer things usually that don’t have that kind of short essay arc, but I think I’ve learned a tremendous amount from all those essays. I feel like if I balloon a space out larger than essay size, I create more room for eddies and anecdotes or the less immediately instrumental, and so there is less pressure on the immediately epiphanic. So that’s probably why I haven’t gravitated toward that form, but I do love so many essays.

Audience: I was wondering—I know you do a few genres—which ones did you start out with first?

Poetry, poetry, poetry. I think of myself really as a poet at heart. I’ve always written prose, and I was never one of those people who thought of prose and critical engagements as murderous to poetry. It always to me fed one flow, but I definitely feel like, like I mentioned before, you know, poets

I think—I won't generalize—but I feel like there's a kind of orientation toward a literary landscape and toward the world about being this kind of person on whom nothing is lost, even though that was an injunction to a novelist. It always comes up when you're doing your taxes, when you're like, well, nothing I did this year was unrelated to my art, so I can write off everything, it's all there—

Exactly.

Every single thing, it's all there. Poets are like that, and I think what's interesting about that Henry James quote is that he has it almost like a paranoid injunction, but in a way it's actually like a great relaxation, which is to say, whatever you're doing, you don't need to worry so much if you're writing right then, you can just have faith. And I kind of tell this to all of you because probably a lot of you haven't clocked decades behind you of writing, but I think one of the best things that can happen with time is that you begin to relax and know that you are, by your practice of being a writer, becoming someone upon whom nothing is lost. And you will always be surprised at things that come out when you sit down to write what you had promised yourself you were going to write, that you thought were lost forever, and then suddenly, they were just right there, and it's like magic, you know? Your mind is like magic like that, but you do have to cultivate it, and you do have to become that person, but I think it can happen, and you can abide periods when you're not writing a lot more easily because you can know that. I think poets know a lot about that.

They know they're not in it for the money; they're not looking to make it in a particular way, and I mean they can be petty like anybody else, but there's just a love of knowing that you lived the life of a poet, whatever that means, that you did the duty, that that was what you were meant to do. Just like being here today, and this might sound schmaltsy or whatever, but I really do feel like I have a grand appreciation of being in discourse

with other people about things I care about the most, and being able to get them down on a page—all of that is truly a life worth living. And I think poets are good at knowing that.

Do we really want to say anything more? That's beautiful and true. No, you do. Go ahead.

Audience: You've talked about being sort of frustrated with your writing as of late, and I'm wondering what sort of ideal headspace do you have to be in to really be productive? Do you have to be inspired or do you have to just push through it?

As time goes by, I don't know what inspiration is so much anymore just, because it's just—I mean I feel blessed in that I usually have ideas that are bothering me. Again, there's always that irritant, even when I think I'm not inspired, there's just something that's bothering me and kind of starts to add up. Like the book I'm writing now, the book I read from last night, was kind of accidental. It wasn't something I'd been wanting to write about, but I had just been reading so much [Donald] Winnicott and other people, and I'd given a long talk on Eve Sedgwick, and I'd written a lot about her ideas about making the mind receptive to happiness in different ways and was very moved by her approach toward dying in the last couple years of her life, and by that kind of occasional writing that kind of amassed these different things.

You know, poetry was a lot more fun for me in my twenties, I'll be totally honest. [laughter] I mean I drank then, and I would drink and write. I didn't mind if people were like, *Wow, is that a poem?* I was like, *It sure is!* That was a lot more fun. But with these long prose projects, I am always saying to my partner or friends, "If I'm bored by my writing, does that mean it's boring?" I haven't fully answered that question yet. Because some days I am bored. For example, the other day I was writing about the Wolf

Man case, which critics like Lee Edelman and others have read as a scene of proto-homosexuality, and this other critic, Susan Fraiman—she has a great essay called “In Search of the Woman’s Anus” about Wolf Man—and so I wanted to write something, like a paragraph on the Wolf Man case, so I had to read Edelman’s book and Susan Fraiman’s book and the Wolf Man case, and then I was like, I don’t understand anything about Freud, so I had to reread an introduction about Freud. Then I tried to write out what I wanted to say, and then I wrote three or four pages of exposition—“In Wolf Man, there’s a patient”—and I’m like, I’m bored sick. But eventually, I got the paragraph I wanted out of it. There it was, so I circled the paragraph and deleted the other three pages. So that’s a little maddening.

But if you don’t think it through, you’re just making decorative allusions, and you don’t really know what you think and I couldn’t stand here and answer a question for you about Joseph Cornell because I would have just said, “Oh I just found that quote and thought it was great.” I wouldn’t have, like, imbibed Cornell or had an afternoon with his journals where I felt the Cornell spirit, you know? And so I think all that researching can be frustrating, because you can feel like, I’m not writing, I’m not doing the actual thing!

Sometimes I’ll come down from my little writing shed in the backyard, and I’ll be like, All I did was read about Freud for three hours and now I don’t have any more time! But I needed to, you know—that was all part of it, so I think it all works out in the end.

Maybe that whole inspiration thing is kind of not all it’s cracked up to be, you know? So the work is the thing.

Audience: You spoke about hybridization of your work, and I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about the difference between

prose and poetry, and if you think there's an important distinction between the two or if that distinction is really even important at all?

I mean the distinction may or may not be important in the ontological grand scheme of things, but I guess on a very, very mundane level, I think the line break is a profound thing that prose does not have, and the line, to be pedantic—you know “verse” means to turn, and you have this thing that can happen with poetry with your ragged right margin that just doesn't happen in prose.

You know, in prose you have to deal with punctuation, and you have to do it with pacing, and you have to do it with your sentence structures, and I'm in love with the way that sentences can be meted out via line break and the tension between syntax and the break, but I think that's partly why I'm saying syntax in prose can be frustrating. Because I feel like the line break in a way can be such a beautiful tool that can be made to make so much ambivalence and so much richness and so many different modes of reading, and when you're writing prose, you're really just stuck with the sentence, and you're stuck with punctuation, and you can break, you can make white space, you can make paragraph breaks, but you know, within the thing, you're really ground into a different kind of sense making that you can play with. I mean, you can do Beckett or you can do modes of amplifying your possibilities within the sentence, but you're still in the sentence, I guess.

Audience: How would you personally define the lyric essay?

Oh God. Didn't I just disavow the lyric essay? [laughter] Oh gosh. I don't know. You know, maybe this is kind of a buzz-kill, but I read a lot of scholarly writing. I read a lot of theory. And I read a lot of philosophy, and I read it like a lyric essay a lot of the time even though a lot of it's not, but I just—I take it that way, you know, so I read “Beyond Good and

Evil” as a lyric essay. I guess that’s why I get afraid of the fetishized lyric essay as something that is its own genre, something with pretty prose that doesn’t have to make an argument but has argument poofing around—I don’t know. I don’t know. I think I have a very capacious notion of what’s lyrical and what’s essayistic.

So maybe that’s related to the quote I started with earlier—the quote you mentioned about narrowing the definition of something down, so that’s why you’re disinclined to do that. And why do you need to do it anyway? It seems.

Okay, so I think we can’t end on a note of grimness about terms. [laughter] I think there are people out there right now who are laboring very hard and very well to generate excitement about named forms and genres, but I kind of feel like their job in the world is very different from my job. You know, I’m like a glutton for specificity, not for definition. Abstract, baggy categories are not my gig. I like individual writers doing things I’ve never seen before.

Well, let’s just say it’s great that you’re doing your job the way you do it, and thank you so much.

Thank you.

from a forthcoming project, tentatively titled *The Argonauts*

Maggie Nelson

2011, the summer of our changing bodies. Me, four months pregnant, you about six months on T. We pitched out, in our inscrutable hormonal soup, for Fort Lauderdale, to stay for a week at the junky beachside Sheraton in monsoon season, so that you could have top surgery by a good surgeon and recover. We weren't there but for a day before they were snapping a sterile green hat on your head—a "party hat," the nice nurse said—and wheeling you away. While you were under the knife, I drank gritty hot chocolate in the waiting room and watched Diana Nyad try to swim from Florida to Cuba. She didn't make it, even in her shark cage. But you did. You came out four hours later, hilariously out of it from the drugs, trying in vain to play the host while slipping in and out of consciousness, your whole torso more tightly bound than you'd ever managed before, a drain hanging off each side, two pouches that filled up over and over again with blood stuff the color of cherry Kool-Aid.

To save money over the week of healing, we cooked our food in the hotel bathroom on a hot plate. One day we drove to a Sports Chalet and bought a little tent to set up on the beach because the beachside cabanas cost too much money to rent. While you slept I ambled down to the beach and set up the tent, then tried to read Sedgwick's *A Dialogue on Love* inside, but it was like a nylon sweat lodge in there, and neither I nor the four-month old fetus could tolerate it. I had started showing, which was delightful. Maybe there will be a baby. One night we splurged in our sober way and had \$8 virgin strawberry daiquiris at the infinity pool, which was stocked with Europeans on cheap vacation packages. The air was hot and lavender with a night storm coming in. There was always a storm coming in. Frat brothers and sorority sisters thronged every fish and chips joint on the boardwalk. The crowds of them were loud and repulsive and a little scary

but we were protected by our force field. On the third day of healing we went to the 2nd largest mall in the world and walked for hours, even though I was dizzy and exhausted from early pregnancy and the suffocating heat and you were just barely over the lip of the Vicodin. At the mall I went into Motherhood Maternity and tried on clothes with one of those gelatin strap-on bellies they have so you can see what you'll look like as you grow big. Wearing the strap-on belly I tried on a fuzzy white wool sweater with a bow at the sternum, the kind that makes your baby look like a present. I bought the sweater and wore it back at home all winter. You bought some loungy Adidas pants that look hot on you. Over and over again we emptied your drains into little Dixie cups and flushed the blood stuff down the hotel toilet. I've never loved you more than I did then, with your Kool Aid drains, your vulnerability, your falling asleep all propped up on a throne of pillows—"the king's sleep," we called it. Your bravery in going under the knife to become more of who you are, to live a better life. A life of wind on skin.

One night in our hotel bed we watched *X-Men* on Pay Per View. Afterwards we debated, assimilation vs. revolution. As always, I was on the more milquetoast side, not because I'm a cheerleader for assimilation per se, but because in the movie the assimilationists were advocating nonviolence and identification with the Other in that bastardized Buddhist way that gets me every time. You expressed sympathy for the revolutionaries: Stay freaky and blow 'em up before they come for you, because no matter what they say, the truth is they want you dead, and you're fooling yourself if you think otherwise.

Professor: I can't stop thinking about the others out there, all those minds that I touched. I could feel them, their isolation, their hopes, their ambitions. I tell you we can start something incredible, Erik. We can help them.

Erik Lehnsherr: Can we? Identification, that's how it starts. And ends with being rounded up, experimented on and eliminated.

Professor: Listen to me very carefully, my friend: killing Shaw will not bring you peace.

Erik Lehnsherr: Peace was never an option.

And so we bantered good-naturedly, yet somehow allowing ourselves to get polarized into a needless binary as presented by a crappy movie. That's what we both hate about fiction, even highbrow fiction—it purports to provide occasions for thinking through complex issues, but really it has predetermined the terms, stuffed a narrative full of false choices and hooked you on them, rendering you less able to see out.

While we were talking, we were saying words like *nonviolence, assimilation, threats to survival, preserving the radical*. But when I think about it now I hear only the background buzz of each of us trying to explain something to each other, to ourselves, about our experiences to-date on this peeled, endangered planet. Our urgency to be seen, to be understood by one another, distorted our positions, backed us into the cage.

Do you want to be right or do you want to connect? ask couples' therapists everywhere.

Deleuze: The aim is not to answer questions, it's to get out, get out of it.

LA GIRAFE 3

Jacques Rebotier

Découvrant une mare elle veut y boire. Il est temps. Que faire de ses pattes avant? 1/ Plier en deux, mise sur genoux. 2/ Ecarter, réduction, progressive tétragone de sustentation, d'où 4, 3, 2, crash. Une giraffe n'avait qu'à bien se tenir.

THE GIRAFFE 3

Coming upon a pond, it wants to drink. It's time. What should it do with its front legs? 1 / Fold in half, get on knees. 2 / Spread apart legs, get low, tetragonal phase of levitation, where 4, 3, 2, crash. A giraffe better brace itself.

LE LIVRE

Le livre est l'animal le plus familier que l'on puisse connaître, rêver, trouver. Les livres sont fidèles, s'ouvrent facilement. Ils volent en compagnie, voir "étagères". Les livres restent. On achète parfois moins de livres qu'on peut en lire, parfois plus (overbooking). Le livre reste un moyen de transport fulgurant. Le livre reste. Le livre est. On ne peut en dire autant de tout le monde.

THE BOOK

The book is the most intimate animal we can know, dream, find. Books are faithful, they open easily. They fly in groups, see "shelves". Books remain. Sometimes we buy fewer books than we can read, sometimes more (overbooking). The book remains a brilliant mode of transport. The book remains. The book is. We can't say this of everyone.

LE RÊVE

Le rêve est un animal of transport des plus attachants, et commode moyen de compagnie. Comme les tapis. Lorsqu'on s'attache un rêve, il ne vous laisse plus de répit, et n'a de cesse que vous ne rêviez à lui encore et encore. Il est lui-même obsession. La seule façon est de s'en arracher. On flotte alors, sans attache, et jamais ne revient.

THE DREAM

The dream is one of the most captivating animals of transport, and it makes for a convenient companion. Like carpets. When you dream a dream, it gives you no breathing room, and never stops so you dream it again and again. It's obsession itself. The only way is to tear yourself away. You will then float on, uncaptured, and never return.

LA GIRAFE X

Une girafe n'explique pas tout.

THE GIRAFFE X

One giraffe doesn't tell the whole story.

Translated from the French by Zachary Schomburg and Alisa Heinzman.

WHERE'S MY WHIMSY?

Rachel B. Glaser

I had so much whimsy
I had too much whimsy
ask my lovers
I was light
I laughed
I lit up at strangers' dogs
and funny names
at any suggestion
there was confetti and ribbons
it was my whimsy
it was partly my birthday
my hair curled with glee
I twisted with happiness
in the backseat of cabs
on the futons of friends

any despair fit well with the whimsy
powered the whimsy
gave the whimsy a break
I even liked the despair
I could get into the despair
besides, the future held whimsy
I saw myself dancing up the ladder
love ended in despair but pushed me to the next

there was so much whimsy in each beginning
ask
I let it rule me

at Kinko's I pressed the hot paper to my chest
friends called in despair and I lent them whimsy

gradually, despair mixed with whimsy
and canceled out like numbers
there was a cool balance
my objects knew me as Her
there was a distance
where there was whimsy before
there was now a grim smile
a sad mona lisa smile
with braces of despair

and despair was no longer fun theatrics
was now numb and pedestrian
the future, a slab of the same

I see the whimsy trapped in a girl's ring
I saw it in a photo-shoot on the train tracks
I have an eye for it
I can summon it up at Bat Mitzvahs and such
I'm not a stranger to it
but once it tittled out of me
I dispensed it like candies
it carnavaled around me
ask

WHEN I LEAVE FOR THE COUNTRY

Zachary Harris

I want something quiet.
That I can't see until it is
Almost right underneath me –
Like the body of a cornfield
Moving all at once. I will shake
My snakes loose. There they go,
See: into the world. The larger
World. I will watch the sun
From one end to the other,
And thus learn to love flatness:
Seeing all at once and being
Seen completely. Everyone
Will know that I am a system
Of small animals that add up
To one larger animal. Come,
Wolves. Come, woodborers.
Come in. Don't mind the rune
On the door, it isn't meant
For you. Even my heartiest
Crops will fail, even the silo half-
Eaten by rust will chuckle
Behind my back – I will get
To the outskirts of the facts
And no further. This is my
Chair, this is the quiet I will
Come to recognize as another

Body. And next to the chair,
There will be a pile of letters
From my friends and lovers,
Like, *what the fuck are you*
Thinking? and *It was so hard*
To find a stamp and *Please*
Come back

WHEN MY FEVER BREAKS

I will be in my chalk outline
Of a bed, with my chalk outline
Lover, when the illness leaves
Me like a clutch of worms.
They look like silver bracelets
As they inch away, taking all day.
I will be so excited that I won't
Swallow sleep for an entire week,
Rather I will wear short shorts
Outside the ballpark, I'll hold
The moon. Nachos are my all-
Time favorite. I will no longer
Eat the mold I keep finding
In the brains of raspberries.
I will clean up my room. But
Which papers do I keep when
All of them are similarly obscene?
They will make such a handsome
Book upon my death. But this
Isn't about that – This is about
Leaving the bed, finally, the bed
Become the airport waning to
A letter stamped in the hills.
Believe me: I will eat lemons
And kale, like a pretty boy on
An urn. My lungs will be two
Clean, well-lit rooms. I will be
Happy. If that's still the point.

SUCH SHAPES OF RAIN LIKE PATTERNS OF DREAM STATIC AND THEN A FOGGED LENS

Margaret Reges

Before slamming shut the cold case door, the children rushing in, the men crowding on top of each other, the shatter inward of glass, the residual chill from the walls, the floor, the bottles, a woman intoning *Jesus Jesus Jesus Jesus Jesus*,

Before the wind dragging outward unfolding the splintered sheets of pane glass, mylar bags, bits of paper, empty gasoline jugs,

before the frames of shelves twisting into coils, before the bulk of a truck flung upward on two hind wheels,

somewhere out beyond the lot, the clouded whorl of rain, some figure moving in the gray field.

Crush of hands and arms *Jesus* the door not shutting for the broad bulk of wind *Jesus* and in the last glimpse is it a man or some other thing.

Months or years before you had seen there slim trees standing in a spring frost, the frozen mist hanging in the slender trunks of trees and the seeming upward movement of gold white light,

your daughter playing there.

Now, flattening, holding out in the field, some pillar or some crumpled figure in the mindforms of clouds.

EPITHALAMIUM: HOMAGE TO MINSTREL, HOMAGE TO WATER

—TO ZS & HMP

David Bartone

And how we love to be your witness.

And how everything ravishes all future pages.

And how etcetera flies on how far you go.

How love's looking / love's plaiting / love's the little bits is troubled /
love's retelling / love's who does not know how much we love / love's who
wraps roses in paper.

How everything may have ruined everything, for us to be standing here.
We, too, bow before that.

How that's something they do in plays.

How sometimes in a funny poem you use the word truck, and everyone thinks of amazing sex.

And how the scent of butter at dawn.

How hearts hanging like trees in fish line.

How a family with the wrong gift, to seem shy, one day becomes Grand Passion.

How it is nice to know that the Japanese think enough of the act of gazing vacantly into the distance without thinking, to give it a name.

How sometimes internal rations and augmentation won't work,
and we have to wait for birds to stop by,

which makes all time
the concurrent marriage
sung among us.

How the owl, as ever in his tree, develops a home, a food supply, and the wild gift of futility in his call—

And how these waters mean moonlight shining on water.

How one who wears the shirttail outside of his trousers has come along.

And how searching love becomes exact.

And how the mouth at the sounding of the word *I* goes opened vertical and reaching upward—the self is always an insufficient frame, however rhythmic its past and ample its future;

the sound now moves sideways and out at *we*.
Because of horizon sought horizon finally found,

in the ultimate round of *O*.

Hope, throes, roam, tomorrow.

How on the last day of everything yesterday,
I, duress in eggshell
white,
becomes *we*—

We becomes we
thought we'd do that. We'd washboard.
We'd peel, we'd pulp paper, we'd onomatopoeia,
we'd weight the light thing and rubble the heavy,
we'd wheel beneath the wheel, and whatever else.

Hide nothing Evolve Bloom the full sky blue.

How because of your way it is easy to live
an indulgent and sweet and tender life,
and not humorlessly.

Who retain the zest and rind.

How
if any man would be a lover
he may walk on the Scythian coast,
no barbarism would go to the extent of doing him harm,
the moon will carry his candle,
the stars will point out his stumbles,
Cupid will carry lighted torches before him
and keep mad dogs off his ankles.

Thus for you all roads are safe.
How we hold you dear you two you circling one.

If we have come
to witness as one does in the woods,
 and we have,
and if we have known in life as love
the importance to name our birds
without the use of guns,
 and we have,
then so certainly we should be most glad
to bring it down to the level of simple truth
and everyday affection: that
we could rid love from the scene,
 we could rid God,
and believe in the two of you still.

You whose linger is harmony, a word to describe nothing is fallow.

You, love and beauty, whose first lesson is the joy of sneaking away.

The airs of springtime go welcomed as they do into what summer stars
exhume at summertime, or bliss of evening at suppertime, or the frog to
the lily, or history to the ocean, walking along, and the minstrels to water,

and we half-suspect you two the responsible party.

Who've but you've called on poetry

to bless this mess.

Who teaches time is ours wherever we are, or at the creek,
and leaning in we welcome it.

Like a perhaps smile,
almost shy with genius,
like water flowing over water,
like water flowing under stone.

Like a listening amethyst,
sobering, time purples
what's red, it purples what's blue.

It begins as peppered beauty down to the soul.
It begins as
some music it muses to muster amusement:

*Come live with me and be my love
And we will all the pleasures prove.*

The swan at last dives *up* from the water,
the poem at last dives up from the page,
which explains a fraction of the celebration here.

Life is the finest secret.

So long as that remains, friends,
may we whisper

how your waters whisper.

TO THE MOTH IN THE PHLOX

K. A. Hays

To the moth in the phlox the monarch's feet fall hard.
The swallow's a white archer curling sharp.

No cloud's a cloud— just light or stronger light.
The sun's unstill in the moth, who, skipping, knows
the blur of root with rock and dust with day.

To the moth the day is pollen, violet lips
held open for the take. And time's the bank
of monarchs and quick birds through which to jink:

a sidelong motion, cracked, over the phlox.
Pink petalled and fast winged, the bank's at play.

TAKE CARE

Oliver Bendorf

Sometimes I mistake the sound of my voice
for a rubber tire on the shoulder of the road.
I mistake my shoulder for an angle formed
by two lines coming together in geometry.
I mistake my geometry for the way mothers
are the holy holy holiest of holes in the heart
and I mistake my holy for a dried up plant
rolled into the pages of someone else's vision.
I am just as full of shit as everyone, including you.
And I mistake my fullness for abeyance,
mistake suspension for an early spring
rabbit hiding frozen in the road—I am
not the spring rabbit, I know, but it's easy
to mistake my ears for tambourines; I am
good at them without expending any effort.
Once I mistook the tart infatuation of a
kumquat for another seedless calamity.
I mistake seeds for nothing all the time.
I mistake time for space, space for freedom,
sparkles in the alley for a sign that our
universe is sentient after all, and loving,
and will take care of those of us who pray
however mistakenly, not on our knees
exactly, but with our hands clasped
that we may be mistaken for believers.
I mistake my hands for belief all the time.
I keep waking up expecting them to be
someone else's, but so far they're only

mine, and when I mistake distance for
absence I tend to go astray. Like when
I can't tell if someone is walking away
from me or toward me until it's too late
in either direction. I wonder whether coroners
mistake knees for elbows the way my love
loses track of left and right. There are times,
or should I say spaces, in which I mistake
fire for work gloves, which is almost always
a mistake and vice versa. I want a compass.
I need deliverance. Good god, take me,
mistake me back to the soft shoulder,
which I mistake so often for the road itself.

MONOLOGUE DURING A BLACKOUT

Kara Candito

What about a zebra?—suppose
you had to come back as a zebra,
knowing you'd spend your life
trampling the savannah with the desperation
of an *Open During Construction* sign?

Once, stepping off a plane
onto the blacktop of an ancient city
where my father was born,
I smelled burning garbage and understood
anything can happen. Often,

it doesn't. The rain stops. We are not
washed away. I do not
glide down five black flights
to greet the electric truck. But when
the air conditioner aches on again, how
blunt, how exquisite. No, I don't
want to be famous. Yes, the radio—
a man with the voice of a woman sings
about a woman. The sky,

you said, is darker now. Would you
call white a bright color? Would you
like Bach better through headphones?—
I mean the seismic privacy of tiny, angry

gods beating your middle ear. I mean

to make you dizzy. Here,
run your thumb along my chin
while two workers shimmy down
a high voltage poll and everything
that can pass between two people—
pleasure, shock, surveillance—
the static of it—private or public—draws shut
like curtains across a first class cabin.

What I thought in the dark,
forget it. A group of zebras is called
a harem. We call them black.
We call them white.

WHO'S THE GLOSS

Alicia Rebecca Myers

Trumpet bird traded for a bar of soap
What a small clean square it's worth
The quiescence of fact
The Russian introduces himself to our group
I wanted to see the Amazon, not the online
18 years immigrated to New York
18 years driving the M60
I pity his route
With the aggregate of night coming on
And no television
We play Yahtzee by candlelight
He tells me his life
We study the map
Quito to Tena to Talag
I remember riding his line
Through Harlem to the Upper West Side
Ditmars to 116th
A decade ago
Later we stand side-by-side
In the Jatunyacu River
In a place you can never scan twice
The whites of his hair stained red
From achiote and the symbol
Of knowledge
I think it's time to start collecting
More than just the names of things
But don't
All those years in the city

Street-backed flashes
It feels like trespassing
The shaman points to the caapi vine
Tells us he can see
Past, present, future
In a vapor
The Russian checks his compass
The crease and squall of joy
On his face
In the now

THE UNTELLING

I was a well and then I wasn't.
I shook a rainstick. It turned out to be a telescope.
I put it to my eye anyway, grew accustomed to distance.
A client writes to say he needs to go to Gnats, France.
You mean Nantes? I reply.
This uptick in luck was really just a fluke.
We're looking at what once was and where it once was.
That blithe star, whose light of death has reached us.
I must have said *this time* a dozen different times, just to take it back.
My barista asked why the sudden switch to decaf.
You ask if blue can be a naturally occurring color.
Maybe in stones, I say.
I lied when I told you that I didn't hide the egg timer.
The recipe called for jujube, not plum.
Summarily, my belly knew.

Introducing

MIRROR OF SLAVERY / MIRROR
CHICANERY:

THE FREED SONGS OF
BERRYMAN / BROWN

*in which the escaped slave and traveling mesmerist Mr. Henry “Box”
Brown* blackens the voice of poet Mr. John Berryman’s “Henry” from
Dream Songs and liberates him(self) from literary bondage!*

Tyehimba Jess

***Henry “Box” Brown** (1815–?) escaped from slavery in 1849 by mailing himself from Virginia to Philadelphia in a 3 x 2 x 2.6 wooden crate. He left the US after passage of the Fugitive Slave Act. He toured Britain with his antislavery panorama exposition (1850–1865) and later as a lecturer and mesmerist until his return to the US in 1875. His last known appearance was in 1878. No records of his death have been found.

A coloured gentleman, Mr. H. B. Brown, purposes to visit your village for the purposes of exhibiting his splendid Panorama, or Mirror of Slavery. I have had the pleasure of seeing it, and in my opinion, it is almost, if not quite, a perfect facsimile of the workings of that horrible and fiendish system.

—Rev. Justin Spaulding of Dover, New Hampshire, July 12, 1850

*Dere was an old Nigga, dey call'd him uncle Ned—
He's dead long ago, long ago!
He had no wool on de top ob his head—
De place whar de wool ought to grow.*

—Stephen Foster, “Ol’ Uncle Ned,” 1848

*Here you see a man by the name of Henry Brown
Run away from the South to the North
Which he would not have done but they stole all his rights
But they’ll never do the like again . . .*

—Henry Brown, “Song Composed on his Escape From Slavery,” sung to the air of “Ol’ Uncle Ned,” 1849

Pre
Berryman

*The poem then,
whatever its wide cast of characters,
is essentially about
an imaginary character
(not the poet,
not me)
named Henry,
a white American
in early middle age,
sometimes
in
blackface,
who has suffered
an irreversible loss
and talks about himself. . .*

/face
/Brown

Let me say,
despite loss . . . I won my life. This story—
how a slave steals back his skin:
smuggles loose like I did. It lives on,
but through words—and
free. I'm
"Box" Brown. Ain't
masking my truth: one day,
I delivered myself.
I ache
my
love for
. . . those left behind.
. . . Berryman can't talk for them,
can't tell my tale at all.

Italicized text excerpted from John Berryman's introductory note to *The Dream Songs*.

Freedsong; Dream Gone*

O dear, I thought, shall my wife and children no more greet my sight with their cheerful looks and happy smiles!

—Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown

Let's bless Henry. Treated like a rat,
with hand of a slaver 'pon his head
from his beginning.
Henry was not a coward, much.
He never deserted anything; but yes,
he struck out when family went thinning.

Some didn't see Henry as human being.
Let's interrogate that.
. . . He slaved, all day.
Yet, he's a human American man.
And blue. His back was breaking.
His mask was aching. Stunned and diminished, he mapped escape.

Their God? Henry's enemy. Fear, it's business. Wild,
white business caused Henry's tears
at auctioning.
He could feel its terror in his bones
as he looked at an empty sky
that stripped him of family.

*from Dream Song 13

Freedsong; Dream Dawn*

Thus passed my child from my presence . . . I could only say, farewell, and leave it to pass in its chains while I looked for the approach of another gang in which my wife was also loaded with chains.

—Narrative of the Life of H. Brown

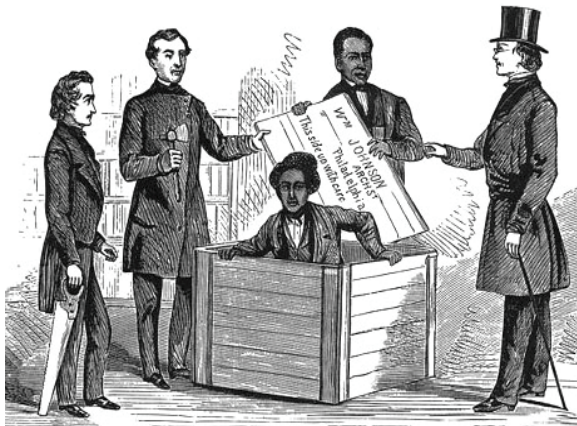
There sat down, hard, a thing upon Henry's heart
so heavy, if he had a hundred years
& more, & weeping, sleepless, in all that time
Henry would not make good.
Starts again always in Henry's fears
a brittle loss somewhere. His old love, his wife.

And there is a smothered thing he has in mind—
like a grave comedy's fate. A thousand years
would fail to blur her still profile in the dusk. Ghostly,
with closed eyes, he pretends she's nigh.
All his cells say: too late. Then there are his tears,
sinking.

But never did Henry, as some thought he should,
end a master and hack their body up
and hide the pieces where they wouldn't be found.
He knows he wanted to. So, he went gone. He went missing.
Often he reckons, on the dawn, his love.
Her body is ever missing.

*from Dream Song 29

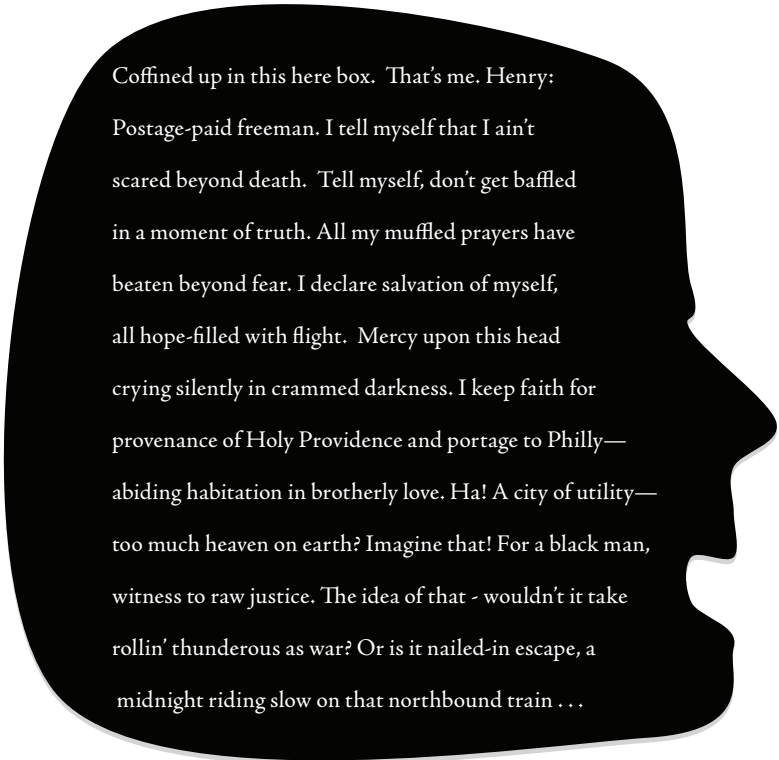
*Notes for
Freed Song: So long! (Duet)
Henry “Box” Brown facing/evading Slave Catcher*



This Double Shovel form reimagines (revises) lines from John Berryman’s “Dream Song 2” and adapts those words at the end of each line. While adapting the profiles of two opposing individuals, allows the reader to read line by line from speaker to speaker forwards, backwards, and diagonally. Further, when the poem is curled into a cylinder, the readers face away from each other and continue to converse in the same way. Thus, the poem may be read as follows:

Tremblin' like a whip-torn waif! He'll arrive
Coffined up in this here box. That's me. Henry:
caught: sealed in slave chains again. He's a-
scared beyond death. Tell myself, *don't get baffled*
in a moment of truth. All my muffled prayers have
runaway. Just you wait. We will get him in time:

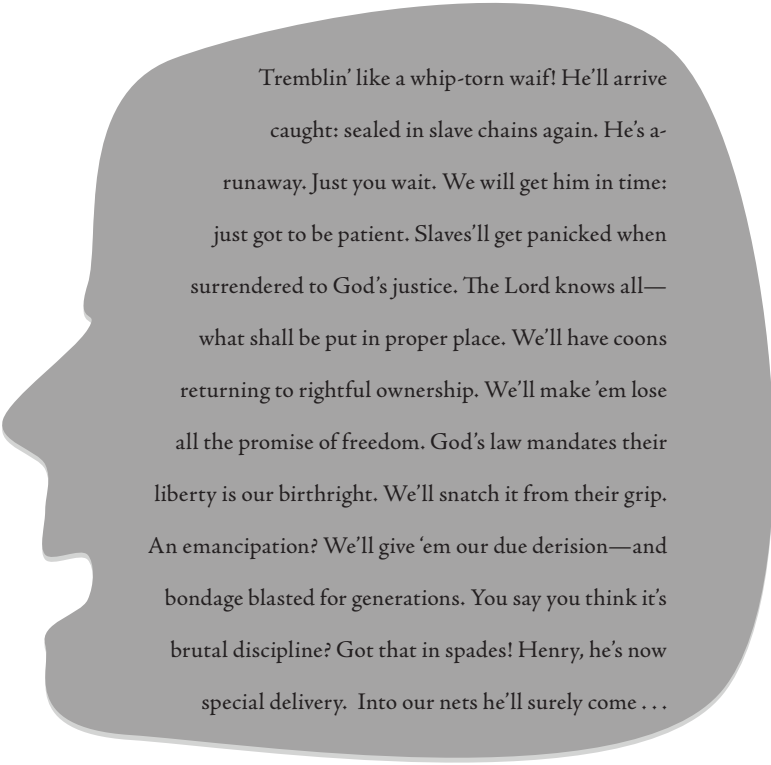
Freed Song: So long! (Duet)
Henry "Box" Brown facing / evading Slave Catcher



Cofined up in this here box. That's me. Henry:
Postage-paid freeman. I tell myself that I ain't
scared beyond death. Tell myself, don't get baffled
in a moment of truth. All my muffled prayers have
beaten beyond fear. I declare salvation of myself,
all hope-filled with flight. Mercy upon this head
crying silently in crammed darkness. I keep faith for
provenance of Holy Providence and portage to Philly—
abiding habitation in brotherly love. Ha! A city of utility—
too much heaven on earth? Imagine that! For a black man,
witness to raw justice. The idea of that - wouldn't it take
rollin' thunderous as war? Or is it nailed-in escape, a
midnight riding slow on that northbound train . . .

Henry ain't baffled. Have myself head for Philly, utility-man take a train. Arrive a time when all coons lose their grip, and it's now come.

—*not* from John Berryman's "Dream Song 2"



Tremblin' like a whip-torn waif! He'll arrive
caught: sealed in slave chains again. He's a-
runaway. Just you wait. We will get him in time:
just got to be patient. Slaves'll get panicked when
surrendered to God's justice. The Lord knows all—
what shall be put in proper place. We'll have coons
returning to rightful ownership. We'll make 'em lose
all the promise of freedom. God's law mandates their
liberty is our birthright. We'll snatch it from their grip.
An emancipation? We'll give 'em our due derision—and
bondage blasted for generations. You say you think it's
brutal discipline? Got that in spades! Henry, he's now
special delivery. Into our nets he'll surely come . . .

Freed Song: Dream Long*

Such was the intensity of the love of life and liberty in his bosom, that it seemed to set at defiance all the principles of physiology itself, and to live without air, that he might for one moment, at least, breathe the air of liberty.

—Rev. Samuel J. May, abolitionist

No servant, Henry lectured till
the crows commenced and then
he bulbed his voice and lectured on some more.
This happened again and again, like war—
the abolitionists, such as they were,
were weapons at his side, 'gainst capture.

The nation felt itself go swoon.
He was introduced, and then he was summed-up.
He was put questions on race bigotry;
he was a question of race bigotry.
Constantly
he had some foes, though. And they spat
& they sat and made murder 'cross the Great River.

But Henry was happy and beside him with excitement.
Beside himself with possibility;
him spending hours of each unbound morning
with the many lettered alphabet.
Smiles and his passion for daring language grew.
He'd feel free—like he'd been awarded solely to himself.

*from Dream Song 24

Freedsong: Of 1850*

... it is not safe for us to stay about here ... we have made arrangements to go to England ...

—H. B. Brown, ltr. to Gerit Smith, 1850.

Industrious, affable, having brain on fire,
Henry did vex the South. Slavers raked up
the world, making
getting home-free harder on freedmen. Tired
fugitives were lashed; languished. Anguished hearts accrued
on what once had been

free splendor of the North. H.'s blues became
dire. His heart stiffed and he failed to smile.
Catching freemen is
now law! he cussed. Forgoing brief acclaim,
bracing his pride, he went onward. He smiled
each mile to Old London.

Still free and lucky, Henry made a roar
overseas. Presses kept on thundering;
his mystery was cool
fire! H. "Box" Brown: His brutal story bore
rave reviews. He burst on the scene
with great aplomb.

*from Dream Song 58

*Fugitive Slave Act passed

Freedsong; Dream Wronged*

Great attraction caused in England by Mr. Henry Box Brown, a fugitive slave, that has made his escape from Richmond, in Virginia, to Philadelphia . . . locked up in a box . . .

—Leeds Mercury, 17 May 1851

Freely, Henry rose up high in the world
and waved and sung his barbed tales. Henry duded up
and p.a.'d for thousands of persons on topics of grand
moment to Henry. Ah, how those lessons won.
With that book of his in either hand,
he was fit now to move on.

—*Come away*—said his bones.

Henry'd got tired of the glittered
old circus of the British country. He'd brood in storm clouds of national
mind & think, (when free from the crowds)
Maybe . . . America
Would he be prepared to live in that world that had called
him, for ever, Impenitent Henry?
The war's throes had summoned freedom's dreams . . .

His fierce & airy occupations, and love,
had raved away so many of Henry's years
it is a wonder that, within each hand
one of his own mad books and all,
ancient fires for eyes, his head full
& his heart full, he prayed himself ready to move home.

*from Dream Song 77

Freedsong; Dream of My Son*

I have no apology whatever to make for what I have said, in regard to the pretended Christianity under which I was trained, while a slave. I have felt it my duty to speak of it harshly; because I have felt its blasting influence, and seen it used as a cloak under which to conceal the most foul and wicked deeds.

—Narrative, Henry Box Brown.

I'm scared a lonely. Never see my son.
Family gone 'cross the sea beyond.
Home is gone for me,
f'sho. There, most sin comes where their God be:
God of Chattel Poison, God of Loaded Gun . . .
He's scary hungry.

I've cleared the Hungry One's claim: slavery.
From slavery, I don't take nothing, see?
For no southland's sake.
British is where I'm living; where I make
my fees and cop my promise. Where I be
cried myself awake . . .

wishin' I was dyin. But I had to make
my haul this way. In my bed, in my sleep,
when I put my head to dream,
maybe I'll get to see my son . . .
us together. *Never*. I'm back, awake.
Free, black, and forty-one.

*from Dream Song 40

Freedsong: Dream Strong*

Mr. H. Box Brown, The King of All Mesmerisers

—Handbill, 1864

Spellbound held subtle Henry all his followers
with the racket of his sales pitch:
his painted signs, his slave panoramas
and mesmerism. More, then less, he was beloved
for his day. His act was more and more
revenging . . . still, they paid him.

He was not so tied up in befriending
his critics. Famous Henry'd railed on southern
slavers that mauled
deeply in his mother country. So
he'd plied his heart and brains and wail. He was
cuffed with love for his freedom.

Once, he'd preached to them—all open mouthed.
Prayed that they'd learn. Then, war's monsoon spread
its blood through and through
the States. Freedom won. So, H. began
in his accustomed way toward the place he'd left.
Across the waters, he came.

*from Dream Song 71

Freedsong: of 1876*

*The African Prince's
Drawing Room Entertainment . . .
Mr. Brown, Having only just returned to this country from England,
will give a first-class European entertainment.*

—Handbill, ca. 1876

I am the Negro who'll coax a hoax.
I am a snarl who does know better, but . . .
I am the King of the Cool.
I am self-prized. I've had the South shown up.
I am all self-governed, bristled with the damn truth.
I am a marquis who breaks yokes.

I am the remedy for your blind.
I am the lawful freeman. Part of you.
I am the enraged dancer, with a plan.
I am the black shout, man!
I am a will that's as powerful as my hue.
I have two eyes, shrewd and direct, both wise.

It is the Fourth of July.
The debt? One century's span
all spawned by the Designers, who'd forbid
me from grasping Thomas Jefferson's gifts
in vain, in vain, in vain . . .
I am Henry, a free black. My bliss is wry.

*from Dream Song 22

Freedsong: Dream Song*

Our Box Henry hid away.
John Berryman's Ol' Henry sulked.
I see his point—he was trying to put one over.
It was that he thought that we thought
he *could* do it that breaks our Henry out this-a-way.
So, here he will come out and talk.

All the world like a woolen lover
once did see from Ol' Henry's side.
Here comes a departure:
Hereafter, something falls out. Now, it might go fraught.
Let us see how Box Henry, pried
open for all to see, survives.

What he has now to say is a long
wonder the world can bear and see.
Once, with his black-face worn, John was glad
all at the top. And he sang.
Here, in this land where some strong be,
let Box Henry grow in every head.

*from Dream Song 1

a sequence from LABOR

(with language from Ilya Kabakov and Alice Notley)

Jill Magi

Ideas for a soft architecture:

1. Pull the loose insulation from the seams.
2. Lift the door back onto its hinges.
3. Drain the courtyard puddle.
4. Pull at loose wires.
5. This may be a school.
6. You may be a teacher.

Revised, soft archive:

How to smooth hair.

Sweaters to avoid.

Sweaters I can afford.

Wrinkles to prevent.

Who dyes their hair?

The polyester content.

Cut my clothes into strips.

Use as warp and weft.

*

Notes for “The Big Archive”:

Wood, steel, sheetrock,
3 rooms, 3 corridors,
string, desks, metal chairs,
notices, boxes, official forms.

“The Big Archive, Version 2”:

All documents hang from the ceiling just out of reach.

“The Toilet”:

Stone, cement, wood,
women’s room, porcelain fixtures,
household objects, hangers,
glass jars, white lace.

“A Room Taking off in Flight”:

Wood, steel, fabric construction,
spiral staircase, partitioned rooms,
school furniture, texts, gaping hole,
a second gaping hole, a third.

*

Notes for “Line of Flight”:

After accusations, in total despair,
having opened the balcony door,
the woman steps out near dawn
to get some fresh air.
Suddenly, she sees that in the sky,
which is beginning to lighten,
there are people hovering in the air.
Either they descend down near the ground
or they rise up high, so high
they almost become invisible;
they either fly alone

or in pairs or in groups, or, clasping hands,
they form rings, which slowly revolve.

Hovering between them
are things of their everyday existence.

The woman sees another woman she knows, flying,
and waves her arms then pushes off
and tries to take off flying after her.

*

Possible drawings. Tuesday 10:21 am:

1. The Man Who Collected the Opinions of Others.
2. The Man Who Flew into Space from His Apartment.
3. The Short Man.
4. The Composer.
5. The Collector.
6. The Man Who Described His Life through Other People.
7. The Man Who Never Threw Anything Away.

Alternates:

The woman who, being tasted.

The woman who, only her legs.

Her gray-lined skull.

Her lucky little owl.

Beautiful retina, her grievance.

Beautiful blur, her protest.

Relief map drawn in the night.

L'ENVOI

Wong May

rot back to you
these did
 rot back all they want
rot back utterly
 in length mass volume
which is not what we see
 but snowdrops (the helmeted)
 but crocuses
& yes yes the primroses
& the early as never japanese plum
 packed buds
each guarded
 & insular as a cell

to write back to you
 forwarding
forwarding
 & failing so —
clipped
 & clenched & clipped
late

— late the bleak wind

forecloses

c/o

c/o is all we can
no other measure

this side

(: care

of earth

READ

On the 3rd verse of Pablo Neruda's

"Dead Woman"

On the line

"I shall live on"

I blew

A red ant

off my sleeve.

The book flopped over.

— I lost my place.

& my reader,

my red ant

Have I send you

On your way ? All

As if

the same poem

Is same

Even

Once ,

& Phouff

One may be

Dead again.

“BEWARE OF HUMANS”

When between fork-lift yawns
Of antediluvian

grey dawns

the sub-urbanite
directs her
chic, bar-coded
hide,
reddish

To the
Baby

Swamped
As they both were
By the colossal/menstrual

— Mammalian ZOO — s m e l l

From which
— to be fair
No one is spared,
(Sworn-in !!
With a look,
“ & Where do YOU come from ?”

The baby, tired,
Born tired,
Bar-coded — naturally
Looks around to us,
Then swivels (eyes only)

Back to mother,
Like he could easily
Return the compliment
This first hour
In his office chair;

— Somebody please.
I have a Dog called Chicken,
But this is not it.

I want to put up a sign.

GRANDMA'S HOUSE

Ari Feld

The pines shiver like arctic wolves
silvered by the moon.
Inside, grandma is melting onions
and telling war stories.

"When I was a girl all the fairytales
were about butter." Her wooden spoon clicks
in the cast iron and father snores
in the green armchair,

foreclosure papers piled on his lap.
"No one had lipstick much less a man
to ruin it with. Those were my best years,
except I was thin and always crying."

Mother closes a book and sighs
at her mother. The cat paws its face
like a drunk trying to cover the sun.
A terrible gust keens over the roof

and father wakes feeling like flat beer.
"I had wolfspiders for earrings."
She scrapes chunks of meat into the pan.
"Everyone shivered like trees

that had given shade to a massacre."
The children, sleepy and terrified, listen
to the squealing fat. Father pops a match
and sucks an orange butterfly into its cocoon.

Door

Kenyatta Rogers

This is it This is where I die
This is the vulgar
the place where sugar melts to caramel
where I leap
where you get confused
and where we put dots between words

Between spaces and for no reason at all
This is the tongue I sucked out of your mouth
The nails you pulled on chalk
where caramel taste like sugar
where I leap backwards Where
there're dots between words and hash marks
above letters This is the door

I noticed the pink in your mouth
There's a marriage you don't claim
places with boxes and umbrellas
Hinges rusted to feet and this is
where I leap farther and you follow

FUGITIVES OF SPEECH XXIII

Ben Pease

Nelson Omnumbra held his metal airsoft magnum to his head, pointed it toward the ceiling, clicked the trigger and did not flinch when the pellet bounced off the ceiling and then his head. Hunkering down on his water bed, the wave he made bobbed him as he watched what he had videotaped the night before: Sheer and Ducrocq concluding their Matrix-inspired circle-cam kung-fu battle, the original audio muted, and this time Limp Bizkit's "Break Stuff" playing on his stereo. The right intensity, this fight was over a girl, but it didn't change anything about our expectations of the ending, no. Omnumbra switched to the next track on the CD-R, Deftones' "Change (In The House Of Flies)," rewound the tape, fell into the current of the water bed and let it all play out. He had recorded Ducrocq and Sheer at the Mills' old loading docks just before sunset. Sheer jumped on a trampoline offscreen and front-flipped into the frame, his blond hair covering his face, the Deftones chorus "I watched a change in you" adding purpose to Sheer's anger: Ducrocq always seemed like the stifling presence barring passage to any good times, on-screen or not. Omnumbra closed his eyes and listened to the rest of the song. He would dub it over the video later. He could hear her enter the room before the song was over, second time this week he noted to himself, he thought he heard her belt hit the floor but he couldn't tell exactly, she was taking off his shoes, he kept his eyes closed and looked at her only when she was on top of him, the contrast between the tautness of her stomach and the markedness of her ribs should have turned him on. This is what riding a sea cow must feel like. And I am that sea cow, but this is not the sea.

THE SMALLEST MALE IN JUNEAU

Josh Kalscheur

The town, like all towns, has a room for him,
not in the center but northerly, near a line
of factories where he meets weekly other males
equally statured and sadly shaped
or so some males say who know a body
needs no movement to prove itself
a body. Over each head a lamp, under each foot
mercy cut into a stool. They speak
as they've been told a small male should speak.
They lift their chins once for pride, twice
to show they'll go to the street
to sit for as long as needed
on the curb. They dream of the town
and its godly work they'll never die
doing. They are glad, as grateful
as they've ever been and turn quiet
when one by one they climb on a chair
to reach up a white wall, the side of a stairwell,
to a red line, then a flood-stain on the ceiling
where water comes each spring
and ruins everything.

GOOD AND CLEAN

With a wet towel drawn across my back,
massaged into me
in the motion of his knowing,
I know more is meant for me
in the way more is expected for a man of God.

He says I'm his first
and I tell him he's the first man I've taken
to the point of disappearing.
Even now I have an idea about the beginning
and the end of temperance.

In the flatbed I'm handed two plugs
to cut my gums and the skin inside my cheeks
to bleeding. The orders are clear
and I finish a joke he starts
about a man with no arms or legs

rolling himself into the ocean.
When we are hungry I rip a piece of breadfruit
in two. When he laughs it is my time
to laugh, and when he stops I know his home
is mine for the time being.

We begin to move through the curves
of the road and turn left down a stretch
we both know so well we could almost
close our eyes and lean from the shore
to the jungle, one edge to the other.

✱

Tim Earley

It is enough to make a human person lonesome. I have been unstitching my maiden holster. I have dreaded the prior twisting of my passion until I have passed my nonce-gun to the nearest deadly fashioner and stooped near his declamations. I have torn down all my pretty dreams with your contrite and beautiful assistance, your hands like clouds or minute and mute birds. That is just your way. That is just my way. Like Filch is the way he is from the beatings and the speculum-gag that characterize his very thoughts and the morbid distensions of his speech that we have come to regard as colorful and bracing, moonlight and eaves and gasoline. The community engine ceases its proprietary function. Unhooking the riven from her shoulder the Lord may bless a young lady who stirrups forth with high stride across the dunder grasses, their swirling beneath her, she a kind of richly histacured peen above the aching world and in peeking she may find the body of a beast dressed in wind, north by north by north until the sky lowers into its glim self and touch. The sparrows have disported elsewhere. We dine upon our changeling's fairest blossom. What was at first a bower is now more of a static whine, a tintured and mediated skeeling of the foreparts and hidden menses rather than a culpable grace. Our spines are tethered! Our spines are tethered! To survey a distress and cultivate more hounds when the moon is whistling in the vapour is a disease beneath the lip I cannot requite.

✱

My several liability munges the process. My severe liability throws trash at the sky. My sever litotes like a vivisectionist on fire. Like a rudely maintained mandolin on fire. I've been dipped in water to put the process on hold. I have faltered the process into abeyance. So that door and post and stair and hair will always contain you or be near to you or the you in them. I fitted the image to its cryptic governance which can be accessed and maintained. Skeletons walk in the public parks. I expunge the choat into deliverance. I harangue the mote into its filigreed delicacy—its natural perversion of the monistic state. I live in Gackhole, North Carolina. What do you do? Nothing. I live on the lisp of a continental divide, girded by historical munitions. Where do you go? I go to the store. I plait angel wings. I die multiple deaths, each one divided into tertiary mortal progressions, so that they may be managed within the parameters of her eternal fiefdom. Marry the expanse, blackbird tickler. Drink the expanse. Is my history of atoms sufficiently composed to return my body to the body or will it be left, quark-backed and finny and slather-mouthed in a fretless dirigible? My rotary streamers chide the prioress. My reticulate beams bear down on the phylum nest. Do you enjoy the mummary dances? I mostly do if they are performed near a seaport. It is Montana outside of the market? It is like living in a giant crotch. It is like saluting the meaty rubrics late into the night, it is like saluting the air for its persistence, it is like saluting indentured servants for their persistence, it is like saluting. So that floor and dross and nary form an actionable demesne and the corollaries of your culture-face, so that to be near you is to be near you or the further riot of the you in them.

THE MARGIN IS FOR THE HOLY GHOST

Rita Mae Reese

Betty Hester's admonition to Flannery O'Connor, warning her
not to write in the borrowed copy of *The Notebooks of Simone Weil*.

Beginning lines are borrowed from *The Notebooks*.

Milledgeville

is the nothingness from which she flees
& the nothingness toward which she goes.
Is the frozen world of Parmenides
where she was raised & where she was returned,

where existence is uniform & unchanging,
where just down the road is the state asylum
where bad children are sent, where she
could still be sent if she's not careful,

where half of her *was* sent—her inner Hulga,
bloody fist knocking on sleeping doors.
To avoid the bloody fist she stays at her desk,
writing letters to friends who have fled,

who live in the luxury of exile, rooted
to the absence of a definite place.

Manley Pointer's Sonnet

To be rooted in the absence of a definite place,
to be not from any place, just from near someplace,
is to carry always with you this portable altar
to the brokenness everyone tries to hide.

To know this world is held together only
with tape & glue & clumsy stitches,
to be driven from door to door selling snake's ink
is to be the loneliest boy in the lonely world,

the last emperor of clarity.
The altar grows heavier at each house—
all those glass eyes & wooden legs.
No one is ever glad to see you, but when you go

you leave them knowing everything
Pavlov's dogs & other martyrs know.

A Temple of the Holy Ghost

Pavlov's dogs & other martyrs know
that consciousness is a mirror
the body created to look at itself,
that each body is only a body

like all other bodies, mortal in every cell,
asking who is the finest? Know some spells
are never broken. The body a mirror too,
and between the mirrors a dollhouse

miniature of infinities. Know this world
is a wind of reflections tacking between
unlandable shores. Ask us who among us
isn't haunted by a reflection in search of

a mirror, unbound and determined now
to teach us to give in the spirit of one who begs?

J-O-B

To learn to give in the spirit of one who begs
means first you have to learn how to beg.
I think of my drunk friend telling
a homeless guy in DC: get a J-O-B.

A few years later, drunk again, hits a tree.
He told me once that his father would
come home drunk, come into his room
with a gun, threaten to blow his brains out.

He never said if he'd pretend to be asleep, cry,
plead, pray or how he'd get up the next day,
go to school, return to that room, lie down & wait.
If he knew why any man would want

to see his own son begging for his life.
The stories about miracles confuse everything.

There's Wood Enough Within

The stories about miracles confuse everything:
You awake to the wolf of Gubbio licking your hand,
St. Francis bringing you breakfast in bed.
Your room is the lion's den & you are Daniel.
Your room is a whale & you are Jonah,
Pinnochio, Ahab. The windows disappear,
the walls lean in. The walls of Jericho may fall
but not these walls. These walls are trees
& you are where someone loves you best
of all, your room is the woods & you
are only a girl, but a whole girl, a girl
without pain, standing still at the edge.

Then comes a knock like a flame catching the trees, & you,
poor wooden girl caught, as pain opens the door.

A Bird Sanctuary

The pain that opens the door
sometimes opens windows too.
You lie on the floor as if
you're floating on a sea of board.

You watch the birds fly in. All you want
is for them to pick you clean.
Instead they make nests, lay eggs,
raise their feathered young. You pluck

out your hair, one by one. Blind fingers find
each loose thread and pull. You pick
yourself clean. The floor is cool and smooth,
the air is filled with flight patterns

and something like happiness in between:
a usage for every kind of error.

Everything that Rises

There is a usage for every kind of error.
Hard to see though, the use for love letters
from you, or for the wildfire
that started from the burning letters,

for the ashes that once were homes.
In the heaven I might never reach
there will be a bright figure
bending with me from the clouds

(the opposite of smoke) pointing
to the things that grew after.
And I will look & look through
the smoke below until I see through

the nothingness from which I flee
& the nothingness toward which I go

from THE NEW YEARS

Hannah Brooks-Motl

All is movement, horrified

Eating my orange hands red

Underground, the love affair leaks out meaning

A woman not unlike the self

Through belittlement and plexi-glass

Some fundamental interior—huh, uh-huh

On express

Chase a simple thing

For we plunge just like a lover

Realizing one is afar

In the elaborate country

What is available

What is enough

My lover who would not scratch my head, nor pat

Thinking what may I do

My breathing grown complex

The difficulties of affair being also

An empire

At a moment of danger

The animal acts its thought

With mania of the coterminous

And lost, lost

In the stuffy capsule I have swung my legs

One's inadequacies strewn importantly about

Nothing proper, underground

What of Judgment, Caprice

Affection, Misrule

This little plot I mine

With whom might one argue

Into much scarcity

That distinction is necessary

A common term is

For he would neither graze my cheek nor eye

I have countered

I constructed

Sniffing basic heat on the air

Such is privacy worth gnawing

Among winter garments

In wealth of my birth

Neither budging nor lifting hands

We proceed, underground

Our past misunderstanding

And pure

Goes a man

In gestures of poverty

I have hidden my face

Watching the gap

Swearing dominion, swearing

We too

Endure impossible tasks

One must wear ripped-up jeans and glide
Through the fixed mouth of morning
Road signs may startle to one's left and one's right like deer
Or importunate memory
It will be both very late and early
The self too will dawn, nicely hideous—one should hide from it
For everything today will be inadequate
Slackly the fine thigh enters the car
And exits
All things swim in this glitter

To be found is the least secret of wishes and yet one wishes
These are old affections, the world
I will stay up very late tonight with just this thought

Some bash the world with their popular forms of reckless
They have a solitude of mere convenience
Its door is always open

I ought to go upright and vital. I ought to be less
Splendid. One could while many hours away with watching
These old music videos

GRAVID

Gillian Kiley

I am holding things inside of me
as we all are, transverse colon, old wound,
song used at the interrogation.
Right now, right this minute,
there is a crowd in the vault
of my abdominal cavity. My chest hollow
is less vertical, specifically
the vertical diameter is reduced
by a cramming organic migration
but there's a compensatory process,
I'm pretty sure
it's a coordinated pack of animals
running a course, making air circulate
in pockets where it hasn't been
so the capacity is not decreased.
So nothing changes.
I think they are hyenas,
circling purposefully,
and they laugh and are pretty ugly,
raising small, dry particles
from the savanna. They say
not enough rain falls on a savanna
to support forests. They say hyenas
are both catlike and doglike.
When my daughter first arrived,
my love roared in my ears for months.
Then I got used to it.
I did nothing. I wanted my time for keeps,

the hours I kept folded up,
one side of a blanket meeting itself.
Now when I read to her, she rests her warm skull
on my hard head.
Whether lightly built
or bone-crushingly robust,
hyenas kill most of what they eat,
but you know what I'm doing now?
Leaving purchases for their scavenging.
They'll do that too, happily.
They nurse their young for more than a year.
I am a huge mammal, slow,
often unproductive, but believe me
I will lumber about breathless
until I fashion you a protectorate.

SWEET LANGUOR

To you, too, hello; I am a flop
not chasing a hart.
The hart is resting just there
on my chaise (I have a chaise),
unperturbed, except its antlers
seem to want to claw the air.
The paint job shivers in their given-off heat,
resettles. Strewn about
for decorative purposes
are pomegranates. Grenades
were named after them,
the original explosive cases
with wicks on top
so distinctively small and fruity.
Now if I find something
with a wick on top, I snip that wick.
There are some lingering questions:
whether this syrup is a sweetener or a medicine.
How best to make one's way through water
without splashing.
The ducts all terminate here
the pipes, the couplings
lead to the pool.
Back then, the fire exits were locked,
the per-head payments confusing,
the consult, the pet food,
the unlacing unhygienic,
the loose claims about the measure
of vitality allotted at birth colliding
with the clock-punching necessitated

by success across platforms.
If I wasn't going out starkers,
I was going out barking.
Now when I do "work,"
it is only to make fragrant the path,
to scent a shelter
for a crowd of people.
It's okay, deplane, unhorse yourself.
You look tired. I'll gore you a lemon.

INUNDATION

Katherine Lucas Anderson

To your horror is overstating it.

But yes, too many tulips.

This has become an agribusiness.

Churning is not the same

As unearthing a bit of willowware

Butter dish fragment

Scrap of something worth saving.

Silence the chatter

Celebrity marathon glitterati gowns.

That robin is swollen.

We've all found an intact blue one.

Bend a branch just don't

Snap your fingers and expect vowels

Acute angels to rush in.

Say your prayers let hopeful assume

Some shop-worn form.

Clod-hop where you fear to tread.

Pin however many down.

MAKE FULL USE OF WHAT HAPPENS TO YOU

—*Epictetus*

Sharon Dolin

In the face of broken

build a tower of breath

In the eye of deceit

carve a hive of light

In the rumble of regret

fashion a new net

In the oracular gut

leaven what's left

In the fall of grief, harvest

winter wheat

In the infested wound, bring leeches

to swoon

In the empty bed, writhe

a pelvic bone

In the stung heart, harrow

a new song

In Fortuna's backswing

let fallow fill wings

DIFERENCIA

Circe Maia

Lo que fue,
todavía se asoma
de a ratos.

Le que no fue
grita un grito
horroroso

con su boca
sin labios.

DIFFERENCE

What was
still peers out
at times.

What was not
cries a horrifying
cry

with its mouth
without lips.

DISCREPANCIAS

Dice la voz de la lluvia:
—Soy la misma hace mil años
y de aquí a otros mil, seré la misma.

Pero una gota, rota en la ventana,
no está de acuerdo.

DISCREPANCIES

The voice of the rain says:
“I have been the same for a thousand years
and for thousands more, I will be the same.”

But one drop, breaking on the window,
does not agree.

Translated from the Spanish by Jesse Lee Kercheval.

Liana Quill

calls

(tongue
familiar).

firedglass-black

shines ironweed

pitchpine knot:
husk
in twig.
watchful.
voiced
warning

cornfield of
moongold eyes,
set
black (coppered),
follow

bold

acorns ,

sawed-open ,

(black teeth.)

keeled tail
to
cornleaf's
crook
(as dark
and light)

(thieves)

taking tithe

for

cutworm,

for

living

hearts

gleam
spectral,
shifting
who,
of what
kind
(unpaintable)

THE DOORS OF PERCEPTION

Jacob Otting

Yesterday I noticed my shadow starting to move in the opposite direction and I thought, Well, I'm still going this way.

When I pee is it "me" going into the toilet?

Man to mirror: Who are you and what have you done with me?

Couple years ago when I was talking about my then-girlfriend I was talking about the girlfriend I have now because by then I meant now.

I'll eat Now & Later . . . when I'm dead.

In my sent folder there's the crazy email I wrote to my then-girlfriend but looking at it now it seems . . . the opposite of crazy.

My then-girlfriend caught me sitting up at my computer in the middle of the night and said, What are you doing out here in the middle of the night? Are you watching porn again?

And I said, No, I'm writing a poem called The Doors of Perception.

Have you ever noticed that the coffee's not done percolating even as it's going into you?

What do you call the person on the receiving end of coffee? He should be called the coffee and the coffee should be called the coffer.

I was talking to my friend who is my age about this old-fashioned poet and he said, It'll sure be interesting to see what this crowd thinks of him because I mean I like him but I have the tastes of an old man and I said, Yeah, you're old and infirm.

There are definitive ways in which this baby I'm holding has been around longer than I have.

Grocery store: Automatic doors of perception.

Don't let the doors of perception hit your ass on the way out.

Windows and doors, windows and doors. Doors, and windows.

The things on the Internet that you almost click on but don't end up clicking on are just as much a part of this decision as you are.

Like a man hiding in the closet with his hands clamped over his mouth they don't get clicked on.

Like women and children hiding under the floorboards they don't get clicked on.

Every time you get into a car it's a new car.

You're rich.

You don't own any cars.

You don't know how to drive.

None of the cars you've been in have ever moved.

Where you're going you don't need roads.

You're going nowhere.

POSTSCRIPT

Daniel Borzutzky

I thought the kid was a reliable narrator but he turned out to be all bones.

What do you mean?

I mean that when I kissed him on the cheek there was no skin there.

Daddy, what did you do with my skin?

I have a sense of being alive at all the wrong times.

I went to summer camp, son, on a lake by a nuclear power plant.

I was not interested in the bodies of women.

Once my counselor thought I was masturbating as he told us a bedtime story about getting to third base at the James Taylor concert with a girl from Camp Firebird.

I was not masturbating.

I did not know how to masturbate (up and down kid, not side to side, like an Atari joystick).

The counselor was upset that I was soft.

He wanted me to masturbate to his horrible story.

He also wanted the boys to give him a massage at nap time.

We obliged.

I liked giving him a massage at nap time.

But I didn't like the story about the girl from Camp Firebird.

I didn't care about what he smelled like when he withdrew his fingers from inside of her.

I thought it was a sad image: the lustful teens on a blanket at an amphitheater in Ohio, necking and finger fucking while the olds swayed back and forth to James Taylor.

Let me tell you a story about bones.

Once I went digging for the bones of someone I loved who had been left to die in a desert by a group of very bad men.

The bones were moist when we found them.

There was life in the bones.

We sucked on them so as to put the bodies of those we loved into our mouths.

This is a bed time story about a stuffed animal, a little dog named Snuggle Puppy. My father gave Snuggle Puppy to me as a birthday present and when I squeezed him one hundred dead roaches popped out of his mouth.

My father liked to listen to military marches. He thought I was a weak little faggot. He filled my birthday cake with a gooey cream and a chopped up mouse our kitty cat named Slippers brought in. He chopped up the

feathers of a bird our other kitty cat named Rambo brought in. He chopped up the bird and the mouse and mixed them with the roaches from the stuffed animal and he made me eat every last bite of this vanilla cream mousy bird roach cake.

My hair was slick and polished. I wore an adorable sailor suit.

My fingernails were so neatly trimmed.

Once, in the Mission District in San Francisco, I found a piece of glass in a burrito, and kept eating.

But I think this bed time story is missing the point.

This is not a nightmare.

I was hungry. And I was not about to have a conversation with the manager just because there was a piece of dirty glass in my burrito (there are plenty of other things that can kill me).

I ate carefully, so as to not swallow the glass (when glass touched my tongue, I made sure to spit it out).

Then there is the part where they take my body out of itself. They put me on a highway, give me roller skates, make me skate on the side of the highway in really tight jogging shorts.

And the highway is broken (again). I fall into an enormous ditch in the middle of the highway. I am trying to get to Wisconsin. To a poetry reading I am supposed to give with a member of the Flarf collective. I am stuck in the ditch, wearing really tight jogging shorts and I stay there, in the hole for 42 hours, until a state cop comes to visit.

Sir, I see that you are dehydrating. Would you like this water?

Yes. Water. Please.

She shoves my head in the pot of water and tells me that if I want to get my head out of the pot of water then I have to admit that I was the one who put the baby in the bag at the parade.

She puts my head in the pot of water for nearly a minute, and I say: I strapped the detonating device to the baby. I put the baby in the bag at the parade.

And I say: I watched illegal immigrant porn while drawing up plans to put the detonating device in the mouth and the diaper of the baby. I stuck the baby in a backpack and walked around the parade in a Mickey Mouse outfit and when the baby in the backpack detonated, I, Mickey Mouse, also exploded with hundreds of other marchers and spectators at the parade.

Admit this was you, motherfucker.

I admit it. It was me.

Admit you organized the famine at the orphanage.

Yes, I stole all the frozen vegetables and bottles of ketchup from the orphanage.

And what did you do with the bottles of ketchup?

I used them to make bombs.

I shoved bottles of ketchup inside detonating devices and also I put nails

in the detonating devices and I dreamed of how the bombs would blow up and the nails and ketchup would maim and stain the bodies of the administrators at the orphanage.

And I say: the female gaze. I need the female gaze.

And I spend the rest of the bed time story floating on a raft reading Walt Whitman.

And when I float to the next village, I tell the FBI interrogators who meet me at the dock: I am here to find my father.

And the interrogators say: we too are looking for our father, and my voice joins the voices of the fatherless interrogators who murmur in the dead dirt, who murmur in the ashes of the sheds that disappear from lack of use.

And for the next few days I write the best poems of my life on the windows of an abandoned truck.

A horse appears and there is an interrogator riding it.

The interrogator shoves my head in a bucket of shit and when he releases it he thanks me for my honesty. I confess to conspiracy to commit acts of terrorism in a major urban center. But they cannot press charges because international law prevents the use of testimony garnered through shoving the heads of prisoners in shit.

I follow the FBI agent to a road but it is not the highway I need to take to get me back home to my city.

It is a small dirt path at the end of which is a beautiful bridge over a dry ravine.

I jump on the bridge and the bridge says: don't jab your cane into my opening. I will not hold you I will collapse and you will fall into the dead earth.

And so I lay on the bridge and sleep for several days while pastoral poems leak out of my mouth and soon the vagrant children fleeing the city discover my body on the bridge.

I sing: I am sleeping and I will sleep, hopefully, for the rest of my life on this bridge.

The refugee-children find a map of a city I am designing but where I will never get the chance to live.

In the background is a constant ghost-whistle, like a tea kettle, and drip drip drip a city designed as a disaster zone mounds of rubble and waste in the plazas boom the stench the river redirected to overflow into the university the university designed to explode from a gas leak terrorists hiding in the faculty lounge main street is a desert there are books in the sand whose pages open to reveal more books and all the books are empty except the final book we will never be able to reach.

We stand in the books as if before the law, says a broken body foolish enough to think one world is better than another.

He sings: The production of sinking corpses is increasing but not on pace to support global demand.

He sings: Human liquidity is hot!

CONTRIBUTORS

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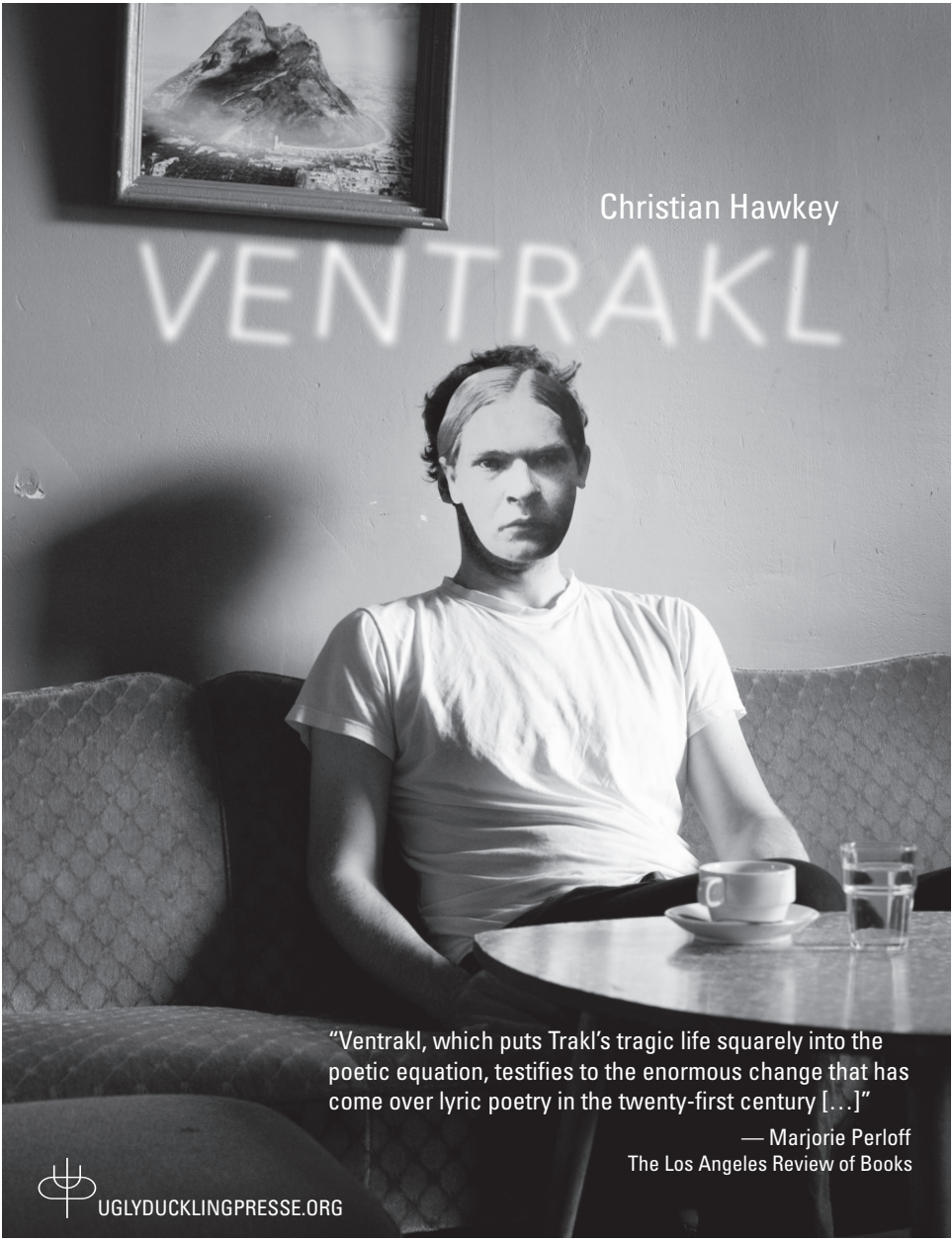
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